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2019 INDUCTEE
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ON THE COVER
In 1947, Jackie Robinson broke Major League Baseball’s color barrier. That season, he also made history as the first MLB Rookie of the Year. A version of the original black and white photo that has been colorized by ManCave Pictures is shown on the cover of Memories and Dreams.
While election to the Hall of Fame serves as the fulfillment of a lifetime of talent and dedication, making it to the big leagues is the fulfillment of a childhood dream. Though we remember them as giants, every player in the Hall of Fame was once a rookie.

During my 40 years with the Los Angeles Angels, I had the pleasure to work with 748 different ballplayers, witnessing firsthand so many magical moments for the team and those individuals. Among them were Hall of Famers accomplishing tremendous feats in the latter stages of their careers: Don Sutton winning his 300th career game at 41 years old, Dave Winfield hitting for the cycle at age 39 and Reggie Jackson leading the team to a pair of division championships in his late 30s and early 40s.

But it was just as rewarding, if not more so, to work with the rookies. With each young player comes a fresh set of eyes from which to view the game and what makes our National Pastime so special – the next generation of ballplayers, full of awe and potential, who may, decades later, become Hall of Famers themselves.

There was the trio of Rookie of the Year winners I had the opportunity to work with – Tim Salmon, Mike Trout and Shohei Ohtani, all of whom started their careers with a flourish, performing on the field while managing the range of emotions – from anxiety to nervousness and anticipation – that all first-year players experience.

No two players follow the same exact career path. Salmon was 23 years old when he made his big league debut three years after being drafted out of college. Trout moved from high school to the majors in two years, debuting at age 19. Ohtani, a 23-year-old two-way player from Japan, had the task of debuting twice, first as designated hitter and then three days later as the starting pitcher. Different paths led to similar success, and each man was a joy to work with.

Some players pay their dues in the minor leagues for a long time before breaking through, such as 30-year-old southpaw Tim Fortugno in 1992, or catcher Francisco Arcia, who made his first major league appearance last year at 28 years old and saw immediate success, registering a record 10 RBI in his first two games.

No matter how many years they put into their baseball journeys, I always found it particularly enjoyable to work with the rookies. There is a special feeling that accompanies the congratulatory handshake following a player’s major league debut when you’ve watched him develop through the farm system and helped guide him through his first Spring Training.

Veteran players constantly remind rookies that their goal should not be to simply make it to the big leagues, but to put forth the daily effort and commitment to remain there. Each of those players had prepared for years – with countless games from youth to the minors and endless hours of training – to have the opportunity to prove himself as a major league rookie. After reaching that plateau, each looked forward to a career that would eventually allow them to shed the “rookie” designation.

Mere months after joining the incredible staff at the Hall of Fame, I can’t shake the feeling that, after 40 years in baseball, I have entered a rookie season of my own. I reflect anew upon the experiences and emotions of Salmon, Trout, Ohtani and the countless other ballplayers I witnessed achieve the dream of reaching the majors, as well as those who were able to harness their immense rookie potential, follow the instruction of coaches and managers and forge a path to Cooperstown.

As my rookie year continues, I continue to lean on the advice of my new colleagues, the Hall of Famers who have supported me in this new position, and savor the potential of what lies ahead.
SHORT HOPS

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For more information and news from the Hall of Fame, visit baseballhall.org.

Hall of Fame Classic scheduled for May 23
Cooperstown welcomes the return of one of its newest traditions on Saturday, May 23, with the 12th edition of the Hall of Fame Classic, presented by Ford Motor Company. The Hall of Fame Classic will be played on the Saturday before Memorial Day, with family-friendly activities all weekend long.

The Classic will take place in Cooperstown and feature several Hall of Famers (to be announced in early 2020) along with players representing all 30 big league teams. The full weekend of events includes the Hall of Fame Classic Weekend Golf Tournament, the Night at the Museum meet-and-greet following the Classic and the pregame Home Run Derby.

Hall of Fame featured in ‘The Great Courses’
The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum has teamed up with The Great Courses to tell the story of baseball, which dates back hundreds of years.

In 24 online lectures that paint a portrait of the sport’s remarkable past, taking you from the decades before the Civil War to the pivotal year of 1920, Play Ball! The Rise of Baseball as America’s Pastime strikes a perfect balance between sports lore and cultural history.

For more information, please visit TheGreatCourses.com/5BHOF.

A look behind the curtain in Cooperstown
The Hall of Fame’s Custom Tour Experience offers a behind-the-scenes experience that makes for a great getaway for individuals, couples and families, or a unique holiday gift for a special baseball fan in your life.

Participants will enjoy a personalized visit focusing on artifacts from their favorite club not currently on display, along with a special team-focused guided tour of the Museum. The Custom Tour Experience is available for booking between Labor Day and Memorial Day on Mondays through Fridays (excluding holidays) for up to four people per booking.

Available exclusively through Cooperstown accommodations, you can plan your trip at baseballhall.org/custom-tour-experience. For more information, please call (607) 547-0249 or email sales@baseballhall.org.

Give the gift of a VIP Experience
Fans have the opportunity to explore the Hall of Fame through a special program designed to give Cooperstown visitors a VIP Experience. The Museum has partnered with Cooperstown accommodations to offer this unique package, which features behind-the-scenes experiences at the Museum, including: a Hall of Fame Sustaining Membership ($125 value); exclusive after-hours access to the Museum on Thursday evening; a library archive tour; a Museum collections artifact presentation; and concludes with a private late-afternoon reception with light refreshments served.

This package is a great way to learn more about the Museum and baseball history, whether this is your first or your 50th visit to Cooperstown. The VIP Experience is only available for purchase through select Cooperstown Chamber of Commerce accommodations.

For more info and a list of participating accommodations, visit the Hall of Fame website at baseballhall.org/visit/vip-experience. Dates for 2020 packages include March 12-13, April 16-17, Sept. 10-11 and Nov. 5-6.
Candidates on Call

Derek Jeter debuts on 2020 Baseball Writers’ Association of America Hall of Fame ballot.

BY CRAIG MUDER

He was the face of a dynasty, the player who brought the Yankees back to World Series glory after an absence of almost two decades.

Today, Derek Jeter stands on the precipice of the game’s highest honor: The Hall of Fame. Jeter is scheduled to debut on the Baseball Writers’ Association of America Hall of Fame ballot in 2020 – along with additional players whose final year in the big leagues was 2014. Jeter had a taste of Induction Weekend in 2019 when he attended the Induction Ceremony that featured his former Yankees teammates Mike Mussina and Mariano Rivera, who joined Harold Baines, Roy Halladay, Edgar Martinez and Lee Smith as the Hall of Fame’s Class of 2019.

Now, Jeter waits to learn if he is part of the Class of 2020.

A 14-time All-Star who finished in the Top 10 of American League Most Valuable Player Award voting eight times, Jeter played all 20 of his major league seasons with the Yankees – helping New York advance to the Postseason 17 times. Each of his 2,674 games in the field came at shortstop.

A five-time Gold Glove Award winner and the 1996 AL Rookie of the Year recipient, Jeter ranks sixth all-time in hits (3,465), 11th in runs (1,923) and 23rd in total bases (4,921). He also totaled the equivalent of one full regular season in the Postseason, appearing in 158 games while amassing 200 hits, 111 runs scored, 20 homers, 61 RBI and a .308 batting average – numbers nearly identical to his 162-game averages for his career.

Jeter led the Yankees to five world championships and seven AL pennants, winning World Series MVP honors in 2000.

Other first-time candidates eligible for the 2020 BBWAA ballot include Bobby Abreu, Jason Giambi, Paul Konerko, Cliff Lee and Alfonso Soriano.

The 2020 BBWAA ballot will also feature 14 returning players from 2019, including Curt Schilling, Roger Clemens, Barry Bonds and Larry Walker – each of whom were named on more than 50 percent of all ballots cast last year.

Schilling received votes on 60.9 percent of ballots cast in his seventh appearance on the BALLOT.

MODERN BASEBALL ERA COMMITTEE VOTES IN DECEMBER

The Modern Baseball Era Committee will consider Hall of Fame candidates this fall, with eligible candidates including players, managers, umpires and executives whose most indelible contribution to the game came from 1970 through 1987.

The Modern Baseball Era Committee last considered candidates in the fall of 2017 when Jack Morris and Alan Trammell were elected.

The 10-person ballot was constructed by the Baseball Writers’ Association of America’s Historical Overview Committee. The Modern Baseball Era Committee will consist of 16 voting members, and candidates must receive at least 75 percent of the vote to earn election to the Hall of Fame.

The ballot consists of Dwight Evans, Steve Garvey, Tommy John, Don Mattingly, Marvin Miller, Thurman Munson, Dale Murphy, Dave Parker, Ted Simmons and Lou Whitaker.

The results of the Modern Baseball Era Committee vote will be announced Dec. 8 live on MLB Network from Baseball’s Winter Meetings in San Diego.
BBWAA ballot, leaving him eligible three more times if he continues to receive at least five percent of the vote and is not elected (which requires 75 percent of the vote). One of only five pitchers with at least 3,000 strikeouts and fewer than 1,000 walks, Schilling was named the 2001 World Series co-MVP with Hall of Famer Randy Johnson and owns an 11-2 mark with a 2.23 ERA in 19 career Postseason appearances. He won 216 regular-season games over 20 seasons with the Orioles, Astros, Phillies, Diamondbacks and Red Sox.

Clemens, a seven-time Cy Young Award winner, was the 1986 AL MVP and was selected to 11 All-Star Games. Clemens received votes on a career-best 59.5 percent of ballots cast in 2019, his seventh time on the BBWAA ballot. A two-time World Series champion with the Yankees (1999-2000), Clemens — who pitched for the Red Sox, Blue Jays, Yankees and Astros across his 24 MLB seasons — led his league in earned-run average seven times.

Bonds, baseball’s all-time home run leader with 762, was named on 59.1 percent of ballots cast last year — his best showing in seven years on the BBWAA ballot. A seven-time NL MVP and an eight-time Gold Glove Award winner, Bonds — who played 22 seasons with the Pirates and Giants — set MLB single-season records for home runs (73 in 2001) and walks (232 in 2004). He led the NL in on-base percentage 10 times and paced the league in batting average twice.

Walker returns to the BBWAA ballot for his 10th-and-final time in 2020 after being named on a career-best 54.6 percent of ballots cast in 2019. The 1997 NL MVP, Walker led his league in batting average three times, won seven Gold Glove Awards for his play in right field and was named to five All-Star Games. Over 17 seasons with the Expos, Rockies and Cardinals, Walker compiled a .565 slugging percentage (12th all-time) and a .965 OPS (15th all-time).

Other players returning to the BBWAA ballot in 2020 include (with 2019 voting percentages in parenthesis): Omar Vizquel (42.8), Manny Ramirez (22.8), Jeff Kent (18.1), Scott Rolen (17.2), Billy Wagner (16.7), Todd Helton (16.5), Gary Sheffield (13.6), Andy Pettitte (9.9), Sammy Sosa (8.5) and Andruw Jones (7.5).

The results of the 2020 BBWAA Hall of Fame vote will be announced Jan. 21 live on MLB Network.

Craig Muder is the director of communications for the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum.
In 1947, Jack Roosevelt Robinson became the first winner of the BBWAA’s Rookie of the Year Award – and accomplished so much more.

By Claire Smith

Alfred Surratt would never tell where, along the way, he was dubbed “Slick.” It was a Kansas City Monarchs thing, a Negro Leagues thing, a baseball thing.

Brothers to the core, the men of the Monarchs kept one another’s confidences, watched one another’s backs, mourned teammates’ losses and failed dreams, and cheered on their brothers’ – and sisters’ – achievements.

Never were the cheers louder, said Slick Surratt, then on April 11, 1947, the day Branch Rickey and the Brooklyn Dodgers signed Jackie Robinson, a one-time Monarch, to a major league contract.

Like so many Negro Leagues players who lived in the Kansas City area, Surratt was an auto assembly plant worker. The reserve outfielder, who passed away in 2010, was on the job on that historic date, and, recalling the moment as if it were yesterday, said that the boisterous, instantaneous celebration spread through the plant as if on the assembly line.

The entire world had V-E Day; African Americans who'd dreamed of living long enough to see segregation eradicated now had a second Independence Day.

The joy within the black baseball community was palpable. The destruction of segregation within Major League Baseball was at hand. Four days later, on April 15, 1947, Robinson would debut with the Dodgers, his first step onto Ebbets Field in Brooklyn tromping out the National Pastime’s odious color barrier forever.

As we all now know, it wasn’t just signing on to be a baseball player. Those opposed to integration would push back, virulently, viciously, unrelentingly. Robinson, a former Army officer and one of the greatest athletes to come out of UCLA, was about to meet his greatest opponent: Jim Crow. And he would be asked to do so pretty much on his own.

One black man against a nation in which large swaths were steeped in segregationist policies.

Raised in California, Robinson and his bride would be asked to step into hostile territory where racism was not only codified by gentlemen’s agreements, but mandated by law. The ugly cultural divide they were about to experience was not only enforced by men wearing badges, but also by night riders hidden beneath hoods and wearing sheets.

The Dodgers and Robinson, daring to change in 1947 what legislatures, Congress and presidents had failed to do before – or after – the Civil War, knew both the risks and the responsibilities. Yet the man who carried the hopes of so many Slick Surratts, Hank Aaron and Willie Mayses never shirked. Incredibly, Robinson not only authored one of the most impressive inaugural seasons the game had ever seen, he also gave lessons in heroism each and every day he stepped onto a major league field.

For the record, the first time Robinson stepped on such a field was on that April 15 in 1947; the 28-year-old debuted against the Boston Braves before more than 25,000 fans at Ebbets Field. He played first base and went 0-for-3 at the plate. One hundred and fifty games later, Robinson had authored the first chapter of what was destined to be a Hall of Fame career.

Likely no other player ever traveled quite so treacherous a path to the Hall as did Robinson. In an article printed in The New York Times on May 10, 1947, it was revealed that Robinson had received “threatening letters of anonymous origin” from the day he'd broken into the big leagues that spring. Said the un-bylined report: “This disclosure followed on the heels of a report that a strike of opposing players against the Negro player had been spiked.

“Harassment of Robinson, the first of his race to make the major league grade in modern baseball history, by unidentified persons was confirmed in Philadelphia last night by Branch Rickey, president of the Brooklyn Baseball Club. ‘At least two letters of a nature that I felt called for investigation were received by Robinson,’ Rickey said.

“Robinson himself admitted receiving several such letters. … A high police official here disclosed that a letter warning Robinson to ‘get out of baseball’ had been turned over to the police department by the baseball club for investigation.”
The article went on to describe a short-lived attempt by St. Louis Cardinals players to engineer a strike in protest against Robinson’s playing that was put down by Cardinals team president Sam Breadon.

The indignities heaped on Robinson by others in baseball uniforms included spikes-high slides and head-high knockdown pitches. Racist epithets were the rule of the day. What historians came to understand was that Robinson would not, could not, lash out, because he, too, had made a gentleman’s agreement, with Rickey.

In his words, in an audio recording archived by National Public Radio, Robinson said: “I remember Mr. Rickey saying to me that I couldn’t fight back, and I wondered whether or not I was going to be able to do this.”

Nowhere was his resolve to honor his agreement with Rickey tested more than in Robinson’s first games played against the Phillies in late April at Ebbets Field. The Phillies, led by manager Ben Chapman, infamously rained an unending torrent of racist slurs on Robinson, taunting the infielder about his physical features, telling him to go back to the cotton fields and calling him the “N” word. The onslaught was so relentless and debilitating that Robinson later said it pushed him closer to breaking than any other humiliation suffered that season.

“For one wild and rage-crazed minute, I thought, ‘To hell with Mr. Rickey’s noble experiment,’” Robinson once recalled.

“He was physically and verbally abused, particularly when he was on the road, in certain cities,” said Rachel Robinson, Jackie’s wife, in an interview with Scholastic in 1998. “The taunts angered him, sometimes frightened him, but he turned away from them.”

The Dodgers rookie would not shake his hand, so the two men grasped opposite ends of a baseball bat as photographers snapped away.

Off the field, many municipalities remained stubbornly unwelcoming. Even after Chapman’s attempted truce, the Dodgers were not allowed to register at their chosen hotel in Philadelphia until other accommodations were made for Robinson. Sadly, this was nothing Robinson and the Dodgers had not experienced before.

Save for the Spring Trainings spent with the Dodgers in the Caribbean rather than segregated Florida and a minor league season spent in a welcoming Montreal, Robinson felt the hot breath of hate at every step
even as he broke color barriers one ballpark, one town, one city at a time – with “Colored only/White only” signs on water fountains and public bathrooms throughout the south and meals delivered through restaurants’ back doors and eaten in solitude on the back of buses.

“He faced it in Spring Training, in every town in Florida that he visited. He faced it in Pittsburgh and St. Louis and Cincinnati,” Eig told NPR’s Wang. “I doubt that he would’ve singled out Philadelphia as the worst place in the world.”

Larry Doby, who became the second black major leaguer in the modern era when he joined the Cleveland Indians midseason in 1947, was often asked by youngsters of later generations why Robinson, he and others didn’t just refuse to leave balking hotels, movie theaters and restaurants.

“Because we didn’t want to die,” Doby told one such inquisitor during a seminar at Williams College in Massachusetts.

Yes, 1947 was that scary — and important. That Robinson not only survived but thrived during that grand experiment showed America that meritocracies had value. And his success inspired the architects of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. told Don Newcombe, Robinson’s Dodgers teammate and yet another star from the Negro Leagues: “You’ll never know how easy you and Jackie (Robinson) and (Larry) Doby and Campy (Roy Campanella) made it for me to do my job by what you did on the baseball field.”

Thus, 72 years after 1947, we still marvel at a rookie who — by any measure — refused to fail.

Robinson, buffeted by societal ills, but steeled by the challenge to change a nation, hit .297 in 151 games that season. He stole 29 bases, more than anyone else in the National League, scored 125 runs and, with fellow future Hall of Famers Pee Wee Reese and Snider, helped Brooklyn win a National League pennant for only the second time since 1920. It would be the first of six league championships won by a Brooklyn team that featured a player Dr. King called “one of the truly great men of our nation.”

For his efforts, as well as for the example he set, Robinson received the first-ever Rookie of the Year Award by the Baseball Writers’ Association of America, an award that now bears his name. In the words of Yogi Berra, some might say that Jackie Robinson made that award necessary.

Claire Smith was the 2017 winner of the Baseball Writers’ Association of America’s J.G. Taylor Spink Award.
San Francisco Giants manager Bill Rigney faced a huge dilemma with about a third of the 1959 season remaining. Willie McCovey was pulverizing Pacific Coast League pitching for a second straight year, and it was obvious the towering 6-foot-4 prospect was ready for a promotion. But there was just one problem: Where to play him?

McCovey had been a first baseman all his life, but the Giants already had one of the game’s premier first basemen in Orlando Cepeda, who was having another productive season a year after winning National League Rookie of the Year honors. With the Giants locked in a torrid pennant race with the Los Angeles Dodgers, this was not the time to be experimenting with a rookie at a position he wasn’t familiar playing.

So, in a bold move, Rigney asked Cepeda if he would switch to left field. The man known as the “Baby Bull” preferred to stay at first, but he quickly realized the move would strengthen the team.

“Well, let’s put it this way,” Cepeda told The New York Times. “Suppose I am as good a first baseman as they say I am, but we don’t win the pennant. That is not so good. Now Rigney says if we get Big Willie in the lineup, we got a great chance to win. That means I’ve got to move. How can a real ballplayer refuse?”

Adding McCovey to a lineup that included Cepeda and Willie Mays gave opposing pitchers a true case of the Willies. It also paid immediate dividends. In one of the best MLB debuts ever, McCovey tripled twice, singled twice, drove in two runs and scored three times off future Hall of Famer Robin Roberts as the Giants routed the Philadelphia Phillies, 7-2.

It was the start of something big as the Giants won 10 of their first 12 games with McCovey in the lineup. Although they would be edged by the Dodgers for the pennant, a star had been born, as the first-year player known as “Stretch” finished the season with 13 home runs, 38 RBI and a .354 batting average in only 52 games. McCovey also established a franchise record for first-year players by hitting safely in 22 consecutive games.

Although a small sample size, it was big enough to convince the baseball writers to vote him NL Rookie of the Year. It marked the third time that decade a Giants slugger won the award. (Mays earned the honor in 1951.) All three of those Rookies of the Year would go on to earn induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame. Although ROY honors were harbingers of baseball immortality for Mays, Cepeda and McCovey, the award often isn’t a good indicator that a player is Cooperstown-bound. In fact, since Jackie Robinson won the first award in 1947, it’s more miss than hit, with only 16 of the 144 Rookies of the Year earning Hall of Fame enshrinement. That’s a .111 batting average for those keeping score at home.

The numbers will likely improve in the coming months when former New York Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter, who was the American League Rookie of the Year in 1996, debuts on the Baseball Writers’ Association of America’s Hall of Fame ballot. And players such as Ichiro Suzuki (AL Rookie of the Year in 2001), Albert Pujols (NL, 2001) and Mike Trout (AL, 2012) seem on track to election when they become eligible. Still, the correlation between first-year stardom and Cooperstown plaques is low. Rarer still is the double-play occurrence of ROYs from the same year becoming Hall of Famers. That’s happened just three times in 72 years, with 1956 winners Frank Robinson (NL) and Luis Aparicio (AL), 1967 winners Tom Seaver (NL) and Rod Carew (AL), and 1977 winners Andre Dawson (NL) and Eddie Murray (AL).

Like McCovey’s debut season, Frank Robinson’s was a smashing success as he tied the National League rookie home run record with 38 to go along with 83 RBI, 122 runs scored and a .290 average for the Cincinnati Reds, who posted their first winning season in a dozen years. As a result, Robinson became the first unanimous Rookie of the Year winner. That brilliant opening act clearly was a sign of things to come as Robinson
would club 586 homer and become the first player to win Most Valuable Player awards in each league and the first African-American manager in major league history.

The year before winning his Rookie of the Year Award, Seaver spent his only season in the minors, throwing four shutouts and striking out 188 batters. His manager, Solly Hemus, told the Mets brass that Seaver had a “35-year-old head attached to a 21-year-old body” and was ready for “The Show.” The Mets agreed and the cerebral Seaver immediately became the ace of the staff, with a 2.76 ERA, 170 strikeouts and 16 wins for a team that went 60-101 in 1967. One of the highlights of that sterling season occurred in the All-Star Game when “Tom Terrific” entered the game in the 15th inning and secured the win. But being told he had won ROY topped even that moment.

“This is a bigger thrill to me than being named to the All-Star team,” he said. “You only get one chance to be Rookie of the Year. If you’re good, you can make the All-Star team several more times in your career.”

Seaver was selected to 12 All-Star teams, won 311 games and earned near unanimous induction into the Hall in 1992. Carew, that year’s AL Rookie of the Year, batted .292. That would be a modest number for him, as he ended up winning seven batting titles and was a .328 career hitter.

Few of the ROY/Hall enshriners traveled a more improbable journey or had a more auspicious first season than Mike Piazza. The Los Angeles Dodgers selected him in the 62nd round – the 1,390th pick of the 1988 MLB Draft. Defying daunting odds, Piazza hit, caught and willed his way onto the Dodgers roster in 1993, and exploded onto the scene with 35 homers, 112 RBI and a .318 batting average. Those gaudy stats made him a unanimous selection as NL Rookie of the Year, and also continued a trend begun by Dodgers legend Jackie Robinson. Eighteen Dodgers have been named ROY, twice the number of the runner-up Yankees.

Mays fashioned a legendary career in the big leagues, but unlike his teammate McCovey, the Say Hey Kid started dismally. Mays had been called up early in the 1951 season after batting .477 for the Triple-A Minneapolis Millers, and Giants manager Leo Durocher immediately put him in the lineup. The 20-year-old center fielder went hitless in five at-bats in his debut in Philadelphia and was hitless again the next day. That was followed by another 0-for-5 outing, leaving Mays distraught.

With tears streaming down his face, Mays told Durocher: “I don’t belong up here. I can’t play here. I can’t help you, Mr. Durocher. Send me back down to the minors.”

Durocher smiled, patted him on the back and told him: “Look, son, I brought you up here to do one thing. That’s to play center field. You’re the best center fielder I’ve ever seen. As long as I’m here, you’re going to play center field. Tomorrow. Next week. Next month.”

The next day, Mays’ 0-for-12 drought ended when he homered off future Hall of Fame pitcher Warren Spahn. Years later, Spahn, the winningest left-hander in history, quipped: “I’ll never forgive myself. We might have gotten rid of Willie forever if I’d only struck him out.”

Mays wound up hitting 18 homers off Spahn and 660 overall before becoming the second ROY inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1979. 

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FIRST-YEAR FAME

SOME OF THE BEST ROOKIE SEASONS IN HISTORY REMAIN FRESH IN FANS’ MEMORIES.

BY PHIL ROGERS

Don’t blink. If you do, you may miss another epic season by an MLB rookie.

Performances that used to come around only once in a while — as good as “once-in-a-generation” sounds as an adjective, it’s almost never been true — are now happening on a regular, if not quite recurring, basis. Still, as often as they happen, there is nothing routine about them.

Just ask the folks in the judge’s robes in the bleachers at Yankee Stadium, cheering Aaron Judge. Or the Dodgers supporters in Chavez Ravine wearing jerseys to honor Cody Bellinger. Or the Mets fans who witnessed Pete Alonso turn the 2019 season into one long Home Run Derby, with almost as many that counted as the 57 he hit during the All-Star Game prelude in Cleveland.

Mike Trout was the guy who showed this new generation of players how rookies could take center stage. His first full season in 2012 was one of the greatest in history. But then again, so was Albert Pujols’ in 2001 and Mark McGwire’s in 1987.

Nobody knew what these guys were capable of before they got on the field and did it, their own organizations included. Twenty-two teams passed on Trout — including the Angels — in the 2009 draft before he was selected No. 25 overall. The Cardinals waited until the 13th round to beat the rest of baseball to Pujols after his brief career at Maple Woods Community College, outside Kansas City.

Mark Buehrle had a clue before almost anybody else. He was pitching for Jefferson College when he first faced Pujols. He remembers him as “a shortstop with a big [build] who could really, really hit.”

Sometimes the only thing a player needs to become great is the chance to get on the field against the best competition. That was the case for Alonso this season.

A second-round pick of the Mets in 2016, he probably didn’t need to play 255 games in the minor leagues but did anyway. That hardly stunted his development. It only delayed his arrival until this past March.

Alonso got rolling in early April, when he hit four homers in three games against the Nationals and Twins, and he barely slowed down the rest of the season. He hit nine homers in April, 10 in May and nine again in June. He had 30 at the All-Star break... and kept hitting them.

The 24-year-old first baseman hit his 40th homer on Aug. 18, breaking Bellinger’s NL record for homers by a rookie, and set a Mets franchise record with his 42nd on Aug. 27, topping the mark shared by Todd Hundley and Carlos Beltrán.

“It’s crazy,” Alonso said. “I just gotta go back to the days of Spring Training when I didn’t know if I was gonna make the team out of camp or not. I’m just extremely thankful for this opportunity, and this has been such an incredible year. I just want to keep building and help this team win.”

While rookies have been honored only since 1940 (when the Chicago chapter of the Baseball Writers’ Association of America began to annually
name one top major league rookie), they’ve played major roles throughout
the history of organized baseball.

Christy Mathewson was only 20 years old when he won 20 games –
en route to 373 career wins – for John McGraw’s New York Giants in
1901. Shoeless Joe Jackson hit .408 for Cleveland as a rookie in 1911,
giving Ty Cobb a scare in the middle of his run of nine consecutive
American League batting titles.

Similar to the first time Mathewson and Jackson took starring turns
in the baseball drama, Alonso’s performance reminds us why it’s fine for
imaginations to run wild every spring. The rich legacy of great rookie
seasons includes:

Joe DiMaggio – Fresh off hitting .398 for the San Francisco Seals in
the Pacific Coast League, Joltin’ Joe hit the ground running in the Bronx.
Playing all three outfield positions in a lineup led by Lou Gehrig, he batted
.323 while leading the AL with 15 triples. He helped the 1936 Yankees
win 102 games, 13 more than the season before. DiMaggio was elected to
the Hall of Fame in 1955.

Ted Williams – Part of a Red Sox lineup that included Hall of Famers
Jimmie Foxx, Joe Cronin (a player-manager) and Bobby Doerr, Williams
was the definition of a prodigy as a 20-year-old. He hit .327 with 31 homers
and an AL-high 145 RBI for Boston in 1939. Williams, who was elected
to the Hall of Fame in 1966, wasted no time showing his legendary eye at
the plate, with 43 more walks than strikeouts (107/64).

Don Newcombe – Arriving two years after Jackie Robinson, the
23-year-old Newcombe embodied the talent that was available in the
Negro Leagues. He went 17-8 with five shutouts and 19 complete games for
the 1949 Brooklyn Dodgers. He also started Game 1 of the World Series,
becoming the first African-American pitcher to start in the Series.

Frank Robinson – A basketball teammate of Bill Russell’s in high school
in the Bay Area, the ultra-athletic Robinson tied Wally Berger’s rookie home
run record (38) as a 20-year-old with the 1956 Cincinnati Reds. He stood
tall at the plate despite being hit 20 times. He was hardly one-dimensional,
battling .290 and scoring an NL-high 122 runs as a rookie. Pretty impressive
for a player who received $3,500 to sign his first contract.

Ichiro Suzuki debuted in the big leagues with the Mariners in 2001 and quickly became a sensation, winning American League Rookie of the Year and Most Valuable Player honors.
Tony Oliva and Dick Allen – The 1964 season saw elite rookie performers in both leagues. Oliva signed with the Twins out of Cuba and earned his way up the ladder in the minors. He immediately showed his talent by leading the AL with a .323 average and 43 doubles (along with 31 homers) for the Twins. Phillies scout John Ogden recommended Allen by saying he was the only guy he’d seen who hit the ball as hard as Babe Ruth, and he showed it out of the gate. Allen batted .318 with 29 homers for Gene Mauch’s Phillies, who became one of the most famous teams to not win a pennant.

Fred Lynn – Few rookies have ever taken their team for a ride like Lynn did with the Red Sox in 1975. He had helped USC win the College World Series three years in a row, and joined fellow rookie Jim Rice to help Boston win a pennant in their first try. He played Gold Glove defense in center field while hitting .331 with an AL-high 47 doubles, finishing with a .401 on-base percentage and a .566 slugging percentage. Lynn was the first player to be voted by baseball writers as MVP and Rookie of the Year in the same season.

Mark Fidrych – With his quirky mannerisms on the mound and wacky comments, “The Bird” was unlike any major leaguer before or since. He was often untouchable in his rookie season, going 19-9 with a 2.34 ERA in 250.1 innings as a 21-year-old with the 1976 Tigers. He tore the cartilage in his knee the next spring and could never recapture the magic he had as a rookie, winning only 10 more games before a torn rotator cuff forced him to retire.

Fernando Valenzuela – Just five years after Fidrych captured the attention of the country, Valenzuela upped the ante. Discovered in Mexico by scout Mike Brito, the lovable left-hander used a screwball and the deception of an unorthodox windup to throw five shutouts in his first eight starts (winning all eight games) for the 1981 Dodgers. He was only 20 years old when he beat the Yankees in a World Series start.

Ted Williams and that fearsome Red Sox lineup were part of another rookie story in 1939 – in addition to Williams’ tremendous debut campaign.

On Aug. 18, Senators rookie Mike Palagyi made his big league debut in the ninth inning of a game that Boston was winning, 3-2. Palagyi faced the heart of the Red Sox lineup and walked Doc Cramer before hitting Jimmie Foxx and then walking Williams and Joe Cronin. He was relieved at that point, and relief pitcher Walt Masterson surrendered a two-run single to Joe Vosmik to close the book on Palagyi, who would never again pitch in the big leagues.

He is one of 13 pitchers in history with a career earned-run average of infinity – and likely holds the MLB career record for highest percentage of future Hall of Famers faced: 75 percent of all big league batters Palagyi pitched to were eventually enshrined in Cooperstown.

Derek Jeter – Polished as a 20-year-old, Jeter did everything well when he stepped into the shortstop’s job for the Yankees in 1996. His numbers were outstanding – highlighted by a .314 batting average – and he helped usher in the Yankees’ return to dominance.

Ichiro Suzuki – Arriving in Seattle in 2001 as a 27-year-old veteran of nine Nippon Professional Baseball seasons (where he accumulated 1,278 hits), Suzuki led the AL with a .350 batting average, 56 stolen bases and 242 hits. He became just the second player to be named Rookie of the Year and Most Valuable Player in the same season.}

Photo credit: ‘Phil Rogers is a freelance writer living in Chicago who has covered baseball since 1984.'
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Mantle wasn’t quite ready for the rigors of the big stage. After he slumped in July, manager Casey Stengel sent him to Triple-A Kansas City with an assurance that he would return to New York once he got his swing in order. It wasn’t that easy. When Mantle’s travails continued in the minors, he grew sufficiently discouraged to call his father and tell him he was ready to quit and come home. Mutt Mantle, a once-promising ballplayer himself who had spent much of his life working in the lead and zinc mines of Oklahoma, drove straight to Kansas City to dispense some tough love to his boy.

“I thought I raised a man,” Mutt said. “You’re nothing but a coward!”

Young Mickey, properly inspired, went on a tear to earn a return trip to the majors. He finished with a respectable .267 batting average and 13 homers in 96 games as a rookie, and made the leap to full-fledged stardom the following year wearing No. 7.

Randy Johnson

Before Johnson began terrorizing hitters as some players are gifted enough to distinguish themselves the moment they step on a big league field. Future Hall of Famer Jackie Robinson won Major League Baseball’s first Rookie of the Year Award in 1947, and Willie Mays, Frank Robinson, Willie McCovey, Billy Williams, Tom Seaver, Rod Carew and Johnny Bench were among the budding baseball icons to follow suit by the time divisional play began in 1969.

But the transition from prospect to transcendent isn’t always seamless. Maybe there’s a learning curve to hitting a big league curveball or developing consistent pitching mechanics. Sometimes the process is as simple as being patient, taking notes and absorbing the lessons dispensed by veteran teammates who’ve been around awhile.

Many future Hall of Famers overcame challenging starts by putting in the time, navigating extended periods of failure and/or self-doubt and proving to themselves and the world that they belonged. For each of them, the ultimate reward came with a plaque and a speech in Cooperstown.

Mickey Mantle

Mantle didn’t have the luxury of breaking in gradually. He was 19 years old when the Yankees handed him a big league job and uniform No. 6 in the spring of 1951. The expectations were otherworldly, given that Babe Ruth had worn No. 3, Lou Gehrig No. 4 and Joe DiMaggio No. 5.

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Randy Johnson

Before Johnson began terrorizing hitters as
the “Big Unit,” he was a gangly lefty with a scattershot delivery. The Expos selected him out of USC in the second round of the 1985 draft, and his growing pains were reflected in 128 walks over 140 innings with Double-A Jacksonville in 1987. Two years later, as a rookie in Montreal and Seattle, Johnson posted a 7-13 record with a 4.82 ERA.

The Expos traded him to Seattle in a package deal for Mark Langston in 1989, and Johnson led the American League in walks for three straight seasons before breaking through as a staff ace at age 29. His 6-foot-10 inch frame and upper 90s fastball made him an ominous presence. But the parts were only sporadically in sync.

“I don’t think people quite understand how difficult it is to be 6-foot-10 and throwing a ball 60 feet, 6 inches,” Johnson said years later. “In order to do that, you have to be consistent with your release point, your arm slot and where you’re landing. For someone who is 6-1, 6-2, he has less body to keep under control, so it’s a lot easier. For me, it was difficult because I was so tall.”

Johnson gradually figured it out and evolved from a thrower into a pitcher. His 303 wins, five Cy Young Awards and two no-hitters are testament that he was worth the wait.

**Brooks Robinson**

Athleticism was always a strong suit for Robinson. He played baseball, basketball and football in high school in Arkansas, and he was a rarity as a right-handed athlete who wrote, ate and performed other daily tasks with his left hand. His natural coordination outweighed his lack of speed and average arm.

From the moment the Orioles signed him for a modest $4,000 bonus, Robinson had a lot to prove. He began his professional career at second base, and he received a large dose of humility when the public address announcer referred to him as “Bob Robinson” in his first professional stop with the York White Roses in Pennsylvania.

After three nondescript cameos with the Orioles, Robinson logged a .238/.292/.305 slash line as Baltimore’s everyday third baseman in 1958. But manager Paul Richards stuck with him, and Robinson’s glove carried him until he figured it out at the plate. He made his first All-Star team and captured the first of his 16 Gold Glove Awards in 1960. The “Human Vacuum Cleaner” was on his way.

**Greg Maddux**

Maddux and his friends Tom Glavine and John Smoltz all encountered some tough times out of the chute. Smoltz went 2-7 with a 5.48 ERA before bouncing back to make the All-Star team in his second season. Glavine logged a 7-17 record and a 4.56 ERA for a 106-loss Braves team in 1988 in his second year.

Maddux was similarly challenged as a rookie in Chicago, going 6-14 with a 5.61 ERA and posting a 101-74 strikeout-to-walk ratio in 1987. He was so slight and unassuming, reliever Lee Smith called him “The Batboy.”

But Maddux was perceptive and patient enough to sit back, learn from the veterans and constantly tweak his repertoire. Cubs pitching coach Dick Pole called his pitches from the dugout starting in 1988 and taught him the value of inducing early contact. During that time, teammates Rick Sutcliffe, Scott Sanderson, Ed Lynch and Smith showed him the value of professionalism and attention to detail.

Maddux won 18 games and made the first
of eight All-Star teams at age 22, and he emerged as one of the preeminent righties in baseball history over 11 dominant seasons in Atlanta. With 355 victories, four Cy Young Awards and 18 career Gold Glove Awards, Maddux cruised into the Hall with Glavine in 2014. Smoltz joined them in Cooperstown the following year.

Mike Schmidt

Sometimes a garden-variety vote of confidence can go a long way.

Schmidt hit 18 homers as a rookie with the Phillies in 1973, but he also batted .196 and struck out in 37 percent of his at-bats. The booing from Philadelphia fans increased as the season progressed, and some members of the team’s front office thought Schmidt might benefit from a mental break and a refresher course with the team’s Triple-A affiliate in Eugene, Ore.

Amid the debate, manager Danny Ozark held firm, lobbying for Schmidt to stay with the big club and work through the inevitable setbacks. Schmidt gained confidence with a successful winter ball stint in Puerto Rico, and he showed up at Spring Training the next year a different player. He led the league with 36 homers and a .546 slugging percentage and finished sixth in National League MVP balloting. The foundation for a Hall of Fame career was in place.

“My point was that Mike had proven he could hit Triple-A pitching. What was he going to prove down there?” Ozark said in a 1994 interview. “I said we might as well let him play. He had so much talent, it was only a matter of time before he put it all together.”

Sandy Koufax

Koufax’s blazing fastball and overpowering curve earned him a $14,000 signing bonus from the Dodgers in 1954. But Brooklyn’s resident “bonus baby” was consistently inconsistent with his control, and manager Walter Alston lacked the faith in him to expose him to high-leverage situations or let him work out of jams with the big club. After several years of frustration, Koufax confronted Dodgers general manager Buzzie Bavasi early in the 1960 season with a request to be traded. The Dodgers were fortunate enough not to oblige.

Koufax’s breakthrough, by all accounts, came during Spring Training in 1961, when veteran catcher Norm Sherry suggested that he dial back slightly on his heater for better command and rely more on his curveball and changeup to keep hitters off balance. In his autobiography, Koufax recalled Sherry advising him to “take the grunt out of the fastball.”

The turnaround was astonishing. During a five-year run from 1962 through 1966, Koufax went 111-34 with a 1.95 ERA, three strikeout titles and three Cy Young Awards. He reached the Hall of Fame in his first appearance on the ballot despite retiring at age 30 because of an arthritic left elbow. No less an authority than Stan Musial called Koufax “the most overpowering pitcher I ever faced.”

Mariano Rivera

Before Rivera induced a sense of dread in opposing hitters to the accompaniment of his entrance song, Metallica’s “Enter Sandman,” he was a swingman in search of a role. Rivera went 5-3 with a 5.51 ERA over 19 appearances with the Yankees as a rookie in 1995.

John Wetteland was entrenched as New York’s closer, and the Yankees toyed with the idea of trading Rivera to Seattle for shortstop Félix Fermin the following spring out of concern that Derek Jeter might not be ready to handle the position full-time in the Bronx.

File this one under “sometimes the best trades are the ones you don’t make.”

Rivera emerged as a dominant setup man in 1996, and the following year he rode his signature cutter to 43 saves, a 1.88 ERA and his first career All-Star appearance. He went on to record a record 652 saves (with 42 more in the Postseason) and set a standard as the first player to reach Cooperstown by unanimous vote.

As Yankees manager Joe Girardi observed in 2009: “I don’t know if we’ll ever see another Mariano Rivera. I really don’t believe we will.”

Jerry Crasnick covered baseball for three decades for ESPN and several other media outlets. He now works for the Major League Baseball Players Association.
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**Sale of the Century**

100 years later, the Yankees’ purchase of Babe Ruth’s contract is still being felt throughout the baseball world.

**BY BILL FRANCIS**

For fans of the Boston Red Sox, the unthinkable, unimaginable, unfathomable happened 100 years ago with the sale of Babe Ruth to the New York Yankees.

Ruth, all of 24 years old, had made the transition from star southpaw pitcher to the premier slugger in the game by 1919. Now patrolling left field for Boston, and thanks to his powerful left-handed stroke, he clubbed 29 home runs that set a new single-season big league record. But then the news broke. Ruth would soon be playing 77 games each season at the Polo Grounds – his new home ballpark until Yankee Stadium opened in 1923 – with its short right-field fence.

It was announced on Jan. 5, 1920 – though the transaction had been consummated a week earlier – that Ruth was now a member of a rival American League franchise.


“Like all things Ruthian, everything about Ruth’s sale from the Red Sox to the Yankees was outsized,” said Tom Shieber, the lead curator on the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum’s Babe Ruth: His Life and Legend exhibit that opened in 2014.

“The price tag was unparalleled in sports history, the story was obsessively covered in the press and every last detail was voraciously consumed by baseball fans nationwide. With the possible exception of the Louisiana Purchase, what other acquisition has reached the same level of long-term recognition in the American public’s conscience?”

So how did it come to this, that Ruth, a legend in his own time, was shipped out of Boston just as his offensive prowess was emerging? Coming off a 1919 season in which he led the Junior Circuit not only in homers but also with his 113 RBI and 103 runs scored, the Colossus of Clout wanted a new contract that would pay him $20,000 per season. Prior to the 1919 season, Ruth had signed a three-year deal with the Red Sox that would pay him $10,000 annually.

“You can say for me,” said Ruth to The Boston Globe on Oct. 24, 1919, while awaiting a train in Boston heading to Los Angeles, “that I will not play with the Red Sox unless I get $20,000. You may think that sounds like a pipedream, but it is the truth. I feel that I made a bad move last year when I signed a three-year contract to play for $30,000. The Boston club realized much on my value and I think that I am entitled to twice as much as my contract calls for.”

By December 1919, the war of words had escalated, and Red Sox president and owner Harry Frazee hinted he might sell Ruth, stating: “I’m willing to trade any man on my team, excepting only Harry Hooper.” Those Boston baseball fans whose ears were close to the ground were thus prepared to eventually hear Ruth had been sold to another club.

“The price was something enormous, but I do not care to name the figures. It was an amount the club could not afford to refuse,” said Frazee, when making the announcement of Ruth’s sale to the press at Red Sox headquarters.

“I should have preferred to have taken players in exchange for Ruth, but no club could have given me the equivalent in men without wrecking itself, and so the deal had to be made on a cash basis. No other club could afford to give the amount the Yankees have paid for him, and I do not mind saying I think they are taking a gamble. With the money, the Boston club can now go into the market and buy other players and have a stronger and better team in all respects than we would have had if Ruth had remained with us.

“I do not wish to detract one iota from Ruth’s ability as a ballplayer nor from his value as an attraction, but there is no getting away from the fact that despite his 29 home runs, the Red Sox finished sixth in the race last season,” Frazee added. “What the Boston fans want, I take it, and what I want because they want it, is a winning team, rather than a one-man team which finishes in sixth place.”

The 1919 Red Sox, with Ruth leading the way, finished the campaign with a 66-71 record, above just Washington and Philadelphia in the eight-team AL. The Yankees, without Ruth, finished in third with an 80-59 mark. By 1920, the Yankees were on their way to long-term
success at 95-59, while Boston, at 72-81, continued a lengthy championship drought that wouldn’t end until winning a World Series title in 2004.

“I am not at liberty to tell the price we paid,” smiled Yankees co-owner Jacob Ruppert, after he had made the announcement of the Ruth acquisition. “I can say positively, however, that it is by far the biggest price ever paid for a ballplayer. Ruth was considered a champion of all champions, and, as such, deserving of an opportunity to shine before the sport lovers of the greatest metropolis of the world.”

Then, in a bit of foreshadowing, Ruppert added, “It is not only our intention, but a strong life purpose, moreover, to give the loyal American League fans of greater New York an opportunity to root for our team in a world’s series. We are going to give them a pennant winner, no matter what the cost. I think the addition of Ruth to our forces should hold greatly along those general lines. Yet the fans can rest assured we by no means intend to stop there. Eventually we are going to have the best team that has ever been seen anywhere.”

Ruth, contacted in Los Angeles – where Yankees manager Miller Huggins helped secure a contract that would pay the home run king $20,000 per season in 1920 and ’21 – claimed not to be surprised by his sale to New York, noting: “When I made my demand on the Red Sox for $20,000 a year, I had an idea they would choose to sell me rather than pay the increase, and I knew the Yankees were the most probable purchasers in that event.”

Yankees pitcher Bob Shawkey, who was at the team’s offices when Ruppert announced the sale, said jubilantly: “Gee, I’m glad that guy’s not going to hit against me anymore. You take your life in your hands every time you step up against him. You just throw up anything that happens to come into your head, with a prayer, and duck for your life with the pitch.”

While the official sale price of Ruth was not made public at the time of the transaction, numbers were speculated about. According to modern research compiled by Michael Haupert, professor of economics at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, the actual purchase price was $100,000, payable in four annual installments of $25,000 at six percent interest, with New York making the first payment on Dec. 19, 1919.

Ruppert owned half of the Yankees, and the collateral for the loan was Fenway Park, it was very much a part of the Ruth transaction.”

Part of the permanent collection at the Hall of Fame is a Ruth promissory note, dated Dec. 26, 1919, and donated in 1999. The note, signed by Ruppert and Frazee, is for the sum of $25,000.

“The 1919 promissory note for the sale of Babe Ruth from Boston to New York is a critical piece of baseball history,” said Hall of Fame Librarian James Gates. “The results of this transaction had immediate impact on the caliber of both teams for many years to come, and long-term implications on the growth of popularity of baseball as America’s National Pastime.

“This event is a pivotal moment in baseball history and in American history. We are pleased to have this document as part of our archival collection. Given that we did not acquire this item until 80 years after the original event, it also shows the importance of patience and persistence in our efforts to further develop our collections.”

Bill Francis is the senior research and writing specialist at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum.
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HALL OF FAME TIMEX CITATION WATCH
This eye-catching timepiece from Timex features a stainless steel case and bracelet with a brushed finish. The case is water-resistant to 50 meters and includes scratch-resistant glass. Watch face features an Indiglo™ night light for low-light use.

100867 | $74.95 | Members $67.45

HALL OF FAME NEW ERA 59FIFTY CAP
The Hall of Fame version of the official on-field cap of MLB. Features polyester performance fabric, high-profile crown and moisture wicking sweatband. Embroidered Hall of Fame logo with Cooperstown, NY on the back.

Sizes: 6 3⁄4–8 | HOF5950 | $34.95 | Members $31.46

HALL OF FAME NEW ERA LIQUID CHROME 39THIRTY CAP
This unique cap features heathered performance fabric, with a structured mid-height crown and liquid chrome Hall of Fame logo patch.

Sizes: S/M, M/L, L/XL | 200710 | $30.00 | Members $27.00

HALL OF FAME '47 BRAND ESTABLISHED ARCH CAP
Cotton fabric cap features relaxed unstructured crown for a casual look, embroidered Hall of Fame logo and cotton strap closure.

Size: Adjustable | 210814 | $22.00 | Members $19.80

HALL OF FAME '47 BRAND ESTABLISHED ARCH CAP
Cotton fabric cap features relaxed unstructured crown for a casual look, embroidered Hall of Fame logo and cotton strap closure.

Size: Adjustable | 210814 | $22.00 | Members $19.80

SHOP BASEBALLHALL.ORG | 1-877-290-1300
MAJESTIC TEAM HALL OF FAMER TEE
Celebrate the all-time greats of your favorite team. Soft ring spun cotton, screen printed graphic with team logo on the front, and a listing of each team’s Hall of Famers on the back.
Sizes: S–3XL
TEAMHOF | $31.95
Members $28.76

MAJESTIC HALL OF FAMER NAME & NUMBER TEE
Soft ring spun cotton tee with screen printed team wordmark across the chest and name & number on the back. Available for over 30 Hall of Famers.
Sizes: S–2XL
NAMENUM | $31.95–$34.95
Members $28.76–$31.46

MAJESTIC HALL OF FAMER JERSEY
Replica Hall of Famer jersey from Majestic features exclusive Cool Base polyester fabric construction and moisture wicking performance mesh for greater breathability. Authentic design details include tackle twill retro team logos on front, name & number on the back and Cooperstown Collection jock-tag at hemline.
Sizes: S–2XL | HOFERJERSEY
$120.00–$135.00 | Members $108.00–$121.50

Members Receive 10% Discount & FREE Standard Shipping
MLB WOOL JACKET WITH LEATHER SLEEVES
Reversible varsity jacket from JH Design has a dark gray wool body with snap front, nylon quilted lining, and contrast color leather sleeves. Also features rib knit collar, cuffs and waistband. Embroidered appliqué team logo and wordmark patches.
Sizes: S–4XL  |  270015  |  $249.99  |  Members $224.99

MITCHELL & NESS AUTHENTIC REPLICA JERSEY
Authentic replica jerseys painstakingly reproduced to capture the finest details including polyester or wool flannel construction, with tackle twill or wool felt lettering, numbers and patches. Includes embroidered Hall of Famer name and year at the hemline.
Sizes: M–3XL  |  722900  |  $225.00–$300.00  |  Members $202.50–$270.00

MLB REVERSIBLE TWO-TONE HOODED JACKET
Reversible poly-twill fleece hooded jacket with contrasting color fleece sleeves and nylon lining from JH Design. Features left chest embroidered team logo patches, rib knit cuffs and waistband, with a snap front.
Sizes: S–4XL  |  270012  |  $119.99  |  Members $107.99

NEW ERA 59FIFTY CAPS
The official on-field cap of MLB. Features polyester performance fabric, high-profile crown and moisture wicking sweatband. Embroidered team logos on front with MLB batter logo on the back.
Sizes: 6 1/4–8  |  NE5950  |  $37.99  |  Members $34.19
'47 BRAND SCRUM TEES
Retro style tee made with 100% ring spun combed cotton from slub yarns that offer a softer feel and natural textured finish. Distressed team wordmark graphic creates a vintage look.
Sizes: S–2XL | 211509 | $38.00 $28.50 | Members $34.20 $25.65

MITCHELL & NESS SLUB HENLEY
Cotton slub jersey henley is vintage washed for a broken in look and feel. Features 2-button placket and team wordmark screen printed across chest.
Sizes: S–2XL | 218014 | $45.00 $33.75 | Members $40.50 $30.38

 ಐ47 BRAND DURHAM TEES
Classic ringer tee made of lightweight ring spun combed cotton for a softer, broken in feel. Jacquard striped collar and vintage screen printed team name across the chest.
Sizes: S–2XL | 211508 | $45.00 $33.75 | Members $40.50 $30.38

MITCHELL & NESS STRIPED SLEEVE HENLEY
Garment washed baseball henley features soft cotton jersey body with 3-button placket and contrasting sleeves. Embroidered team logo felt patch on left chest and woven jock tag at hem.
Sizes: S–2XL | 218007 | $50.00 $37.50 | Members $45.00 $33.75

NEW ERA
49FORTY CAP
Comfy 100% cotton cap features a medium crown, six panel construction and curved bill. Raised team logo embroidery.
Sizes: XS–2XL
211605 | $31.99
Members $28.79

Members Receive 10% Discount & FREE Standard Shipping
HALL OF FAMER BOBBLEHEADS
A favorite with collectors, Hall of Famer bobbleheads are available in several different styles for over 25 Hall of Famers. Each measures approximately 8” tall.
HOFBOBBLE | $15.95–$44.95
Members $14.36–$40.96

HALL OF FAME PLAQUE POSTCARD SET
Complete set of plaque postcards includes all 329 Hall of Famers. Also available in team sets and individual postcards.
HOFCARD | $100.00 | Members $90.00

HALL OF FAME PLAQUE PIN SETS
Limited edition Hall of Famer three-pin set features jersey pin, player image pin and a 3D plaque replica pin. Each set is individually numbered and includes protective display case.
HOFPINSET | $35.00 | Members $31.50

HALL OF FAME ACRYLIC PLAQUES
Finely crafted replicas of the Hall of Fame plaques in acrylic with laser etched plaque image, sturdy base and engraved nameplate. Measures 6.25” x 4.25”.
HOFACRYLIC | $39.95 | Members $35.95

SHOP.BASEBALLHALL.ORG | 1-877-290-1300
NEGRO LEAGUE POSTCARD SET
The Negro Leagues centennial team (1920–2020) postcard set features the art of Graig Kreindler. Set includes 34 postcards of baseball immortals featuring Josh Gibson, Buck O’Neil, Satchel Paige & more.
450000 | $19.99 | Members $17.99

HALL OF FAMER CAREER STAT BATS
Handcrafted bats from the Cooperstown Bat Company. Each 34” bat features Induction logo, career statistics, jersey number and replica signature. Available in a limited edition quantity of 500 bats per Hall of Famer.
HOFSTATBAT | $130.00 Members $117.00

REPRINT BASEBALL CARD SETS
Add to your baseball card collection with reprints of some of the most highly prized card sets ever produced. Available for the 1915 Cracker Jack, 1933 Goudey and the 1949 Bowman sets.
CARDREPS | $44.95–54.95 | Members $40.95–$49.45

2019 TOPPS BASEBALL CARD FACTORY SET
Factory sealed 705-card set includes the complete set of Series 1 and Series 2 cards, plus a five-card pack of photo variation Rookie Cards.
596021 | $69.95 | Members $62.95

ROOKIE CARDS
The classic baseball card collectible available in a selection of Hall of Famers and current MLB players. Each is packaged in a clear protective acrylic card holder.
ROOKIECARD | Check website for pricing

Members Receive 10% Discount & FREE Standard Shipping
HALL OF FAMER AUTOGRAPH BASEBALLS
Hall of Fame logo baseballs autographed by your favorite Hall of Famers. Includes display case with rich mahogany finish wood base and removable glass cover with anti-UV coating. Signatures are independently authenticated and include certificate of authenticity.
HOFAUTOBB  |  $110.00–$799.00  |  Members $99.00–$719.10

HALL OF FAMER AUTOGRAPH BATS
Limited edition player bats hand-signed by baseball's greats. Each bat measures 34” and features engraved graphic. Signatures are independently authenticated and include certificate of authenticity. Limited edition of 12 bats per Hall of Famer.
HOFAUTOBATS  |  $299.00–$1199.00  |  Members $269.10–$1079.10

COMMEMORATIVE BASEBALLS
Limited edition commemorative baseballs feature art depicting classic stadiums, iconic movies, great players & teams. Each includes a protective lucite display box.
600290  |  $31.95  |  Members $28.76

HALL OF FAMER AUTOGRAPH GOLD GLOVES
Mini-Gold Gloves signed by some of the game's greatest defenders including Johnny Bench, Ken Griffey Jr, Brooks Robinson & Ozzie Smith. Signatures are independently authenticated and include certificate of authenticity.
AUTOGG  |  $199.00–$499.00  |  Members $179.10–$449.10
STADIUM VIEWS 3D WALL ART
Three-dimensional stadium art constructed with five layers of wood. Lightweight design and pre-cut notch on the back make for easy hanging. Recessed team logo. Measures 17” × 13”.
940025 | $59.99 | Members $53.99

HISTORIC BASEBALL PHOTOS
Faithful reproductions of photos from the Hall of Fame archives featuring historic moments, players and teams. Available matted, or matted and framed.
Matt & Framed 100058 | $49.95 | Members $44.96
Matted Only HOFPHOTO | $19.95 | Members $17.96

FRAMED PANORAMIC PHOTOS
Reprints of panoramic images from the Hall of Fame archives featuring classic ballparks and historic teams from the early decades of the 20th century. Each photo is double matted, framed and comes ready to hang.
435218 | $325.00 | Members $292.50

HALL OF FAME HOME PLATE FLAG
Handcrafted American flag home plate measures 17” just like an official home plate. Made of distressed wood which is sanded and stained to give the piece a rustic feel. Made in the USA.
940001 | $150.00 | Members $135.00

JUSTYN FARANO LITHOGRAPHS
Limited edition lithographs of original art by renowned sports artist Justyn Farano. Each is individually hand-signed and numbered by the artist. Measures 11” × 14”.
192007 | $30.00 | Members $27.00

Members Receive 10% Discount & FREE Standard Shipping
FRAMED WORLD SERIES TICKET PHOTOMINTS
Replica World Series ticket photomint double matted and framed with team logo and World Series Champion coins. Includes a certificate of authenticity.
WSTIX | $49.99–$499.99 | Members $44.99–$449.99

LIMITED EDITION ARTIFACT COLLAGE
Historic photo collages feature some of the game’s all-time greats with photos and replica artifacts from the Hall of Fame archives. Each is matted and framed in a limited edition quantity of 500 each. Available for Roberto Clemente, Carlton Fisk, Lou Gehrig, Mickey Mantle, Cal Ripken, Jackie Robinson, Babe Ruth & Ted Williams. Made in the USA.
435220 | $250.00 | Members $225.00

HALL OF FAMER SUPREME PHOTOMINTS
Hall of Famer photo collage framed with a 39mm commemorative team coin. Each is individually numbered, double matted and framed under glass. Available in a limited edition of 5,000 per Hall of Famer. Measures 12” × 20”.
435223 | $59.99 | Members $53.99

HALL OF FAMER UNIFRAMES
Designed to look like the back of your favorite Hall of Famer’s jersey, each 20” × 20” print also includes a player action image. Framed under glass with a wooden frame.
100079 | $75.00 | Members $67.50

WORLD SERIES TICKET REPLICAS
Enlarged replicas of World Series tickets from the Hall of Fame archives. Each original ticket was scanned, enlarged 250% and printed on durable fiberboard. Includes a notched groove on the back for hanging.
190805 | $21.95 | Members $19.76

FRAMED WORLD SERIES TICKET PHOTOMINTS
Replica World Series ticket photomint double matted and framed with team logo and World Series Champion coins. Includes a certificate of authenticity.
WSTIX | $49.99–$499.99 | Members $44.99–$449.99

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SHOP.BASEBALLHALL.ORG | 1-877-290-1300
PLAY BALL! DVD SET

Play Ball! The Rise of Baseball as America’s Pastime includes twenty-four 30-minute lectures that paint a portrait of baseball’s remarkable past from the decades before the Civil War to the pivotal year of 1920.

310500 | $49.95 | Members $44.96

VINTAGE BASEBALL GLOVE WALLETS

Unique handmade wallets made from recycled baseball gloves. Each is fabricated from genuine cowhide leather with its own one-of-a-kind design.

100907 | $85.00 | Members $76.50

HALL OF FAMER SIGNED GRASSROOTS BASEBALL BOOK

Photographer Jean Fruth captures baseball at its “grassroots” with more than 250 images from all levels of amateur baseball. Each chapter opens with a portrait of a baseball legend and first-person essay of their memories of the game. Each signed by Jean Fruth and one of the baseball legends featured in the book.

GROOT | $80.00 | Members $72.00

2019 INDUCTION WEEKEND DVD

Relive the 2019 Induction Ceremony in its entirety, plus bonus footage of the Hall of Fame Awards Ceremony and Legends of the Game Roundtable program. Approximate run time 5 hours and 8 minutes.

310019 | $14.95 | Members $13.46

2019 HALL OF FAME ALMANAC

The perfect Hall of Famer reference guide. Includes in-depth bios, career stats & accomplishments, plaque image and photo for each Hall of Fame member. 576 pages.

117171 | $24.95 | Members $22.46

2019 HALL OF FAME YEARBOOK

Our annual yearbook celebrates the careers of the 2019 Induction Class with feature articles on each inductee. Also includes mini-bios of each of the 329 Hall of Fame members. 148 pages.

117170 | $10.00 | Members $9.00

Members Receive 10% Discount & FREE Standard Shipping
HALL OF FAMER DECANTERS
Unique baseball shaped decanters from the Cooperstown Distillery feature replica signatures of your favorite Hall of Famers, home plate base, pewter-like Hall of Fame emblem and an Ash wood stopper. Measures approximately 7.5” × 4.5” and holds 750ml of liquid.
501249 | $49.95 | Members $44.96

HALL OF FAME GLASSWARE
Beautifully crafted glassware from the Cooperstown Distillery featuring etched Hall of Fame logos. Available in glencairn, rocks and stemless wine glasses.
HOFGLASS | $8.95–$12.95 | Members $8.06–$11.66

HALL OF FAME HOME PLATE COASTER SET
Cowhide leather coasters die-cut in the shape of a home plate with debossed Hall of Fame logo. Four coasters per set.
336055 | $24.95 | Members $22.46

HALL OF FAME KITTY KELLER HOLIDAY ORNAMENT
Our keepsake cloisonné ornament from Kitty Keller is a handcrafted work of art. Each ornament is individually formed by hand using 24k gold plated wires that separate the elements of the enamel design. Measures 3” in diameter.
505880 | $49.95 | Members $44.96

2019 HALL OF FAME HOLIDAY ORNAMENT
Our annual holiday ornament is designed exclusively for the Hall of Fame and features a three dimensional snow globe design. Crafted from solid brass with rhodium plating. Measures approximately 2 ½” × 3 ⅜”.
520086 | $18.95 | Members $17.06
PITCHER

TOM SEAGER

CLASS OF 1992

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME
GEORGE THOMAS SEAVER

Elected: 1992 • Born: Nov. 17, 1944, Fresno, Calif.
Batted: Right  Threw: Right  •  Height: 6'1"  Weight: 195 pounds
Chicago White Sox (1984–86); Boston Red Sox (1986)

"I didn't feel there was any way he could miss. I mean, here was a guy who was throwing gas, the mid-90s, on the corners."
– FORMER METS CATCHER JERRY GROTE ON TOM SEAVER'S FIRST YEARS WITH THE TEAM

"Tom Seaver was the symbol of the Mets in the early years and the cornerstone of the championships in 1969 and 1973."
– FORMER METS GENERAL MANAGER FRANK CASHEN

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All statistics are from baseball-reference.com • All bolded marks are league-leading totals • Bolded and italicized marks are major league-best totals


DID YOU KNOW ...

★ ...that on April 22, 1970, Tom Seaver struck out 10 straight San Diego batters to set a record that still stands?
★ ...that on June 16, 1978, Seaver pitched a no-hitter against the Cardinals?
★ ...that in 1981, Seaver became just the fifth pitcher in history to reach the 3,000 strikeout mark?

WHAT THEY SAY ...

★ “I didn’t feel there was any way he could miss. I mean, here was a guy who was throwing gas, the mid-90s, on the corners.”
– FORMER METS CATCHER JERRY GROTE ON TOM SEAVER’S FIRST YEARS WITH THE TEAM

★ “Tom Seaver was the symbol of the Mets in the early years and the cornerstone of the championships in 1969 and 1973.”
– FORMER METS GENERAL MANAGER FRANK CASHEN

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The players and teams made history. The artifacts told the tale.

And the generous donations of dozens of pieces means the memorable 2019 season will be preserved forever in Cooperstown.

The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum’s additions to the collection this year included:

**Teaming up**

Pitcher Edwin Jackson debuted for the Toronto Blue Jays on May 14, wearing this cap (right) while on the mound. The Blue Jays became the 14th MLB team that Jackson has pitched for, a new record for any player.

Later in the 2019 season, Jackson pitched for the Tigers – a team he played for in 2009 when he was named to the All-Star Game.

**One man gang**

The Mets’ Noah Syndergaard wore these spikes (right) on May 2 when he shut out the Reds and homered for the game’s only run in his team’s 1-0 victory.

It marked just the seventh time in big league history – and the first since 1983 – that a pitcher had thrown a shutout and accounted for the game’s only run with a home run.

**3,000 CCs**

Yankees pitcher CC Sabathia wore this jersey (top right) on April 30 during the game in which he struck out his 3,000th career batter.

Sabathia, who retired after the 2019 season, became only the 17th pitcher in big league history to reach the 3,000-strikeout mark.
One cap, two cap

Mike Fiers of the Athletics wore this cap (top left) when he no-hit the Reds on May 7. It was Fiers’ second career no-hitter, following his gem for the Astros against the Dodgers on Aug. 21, 2015. Fiers’ cap from that game is also part of the Hall of Fame collection.

Get a grip

The Rangers’ Joey Gallo wore these batting gloves (top right) on May 8 when he hit his 100th career home run.

Gallo, who was named to his first All-Star Game in 2019, reached 100 home runs in his 377th big league game, the fastest in American League history. Only the Pirates’ Ralph Kiner (376 games) and the Phillies’ Ryan Howard (325) reached the century mark in fewer games.

European vacation

D.J. LeMahieu of the Yankees used this bat (below) on June 29 when he became the first player to record a hit in a regular-season game on European soil.

A 2019 All-Star, LeMahieu set a career high in home runs this year and helped lead the Yankees to the American League East title. Craig Muder is the director of communications for the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum.
T he exact date is lost in the sweep of history, but we do know it was around 1980. At a precise moment, someone—perhaps gazing at a small rectangle featuring the image of a baseball player—spoke the words “rookie card.”

From that moment forward, life would never be the same for anyone who finds joy in the world of baseball cards.

Those who remember trekking to the corner store clutching coins with eager anticipation of “the pack” never uttered such a phrase. Why value the card of a new player vs. one of Ted Williams, Mickey Mantle or Willie Mays? Cards of rookies yet to accomplish anything were quickly passed over or traded away.

By 1980, the generation that had avidly pursued those treasures, the baby boomers, were becoming adults. Most had left behind the childhood hobby of collecting cards, but now they had disposable income, and many still loved baseball. Perhaps they experienced the mythological trauma of discovering mom had thrown out their cards. Whatever the trigger, a flood of boomers headed to card shows all over America willing to swap money for the cardboard memories of their youth.

Almost overnight, an industry was born. Dealers scoured yard sales and flea markets, hoping to turn penny buys into dollar sales. In those pre-internet days, publications sprang up to cover the explosion of interest, filled with ads from a burgeoning army of card dealers.

In a highly competitive market, it’s critical to find ways to boost profits. Enter the hitherto unknown concept of a rookie card, loosely defined as the first card produced featuring a player’s picture and statistics. We’ll return to definition complications later.

By 1986, the monthly newsstand magazine Baseball Cards put out a special issue devoted to the rookie card frenzy. The lead article by publisher Bob Lemke explained how it came about.

“Essentially, the entire rookie card phenomenon began as nothing more than dealer hype,” Lemke wrote, “a way to sell more new baseball cards than ever before at unprecedented prices.”

Ads highlighted rookie status for older cards, often at double or triple the price of the player’s subsequent cards. The concept caught on with collectors, who began hoarding first-year cards of newer players as they were issued. Card manufacturers responded by cranking out even more cards to satisfy what seemed an insatiable appetite, especially for rookies who might someday be the next Mantle or Mays.

Overproduction in the 1980s led to the inevitable crash, and 1980s rookie cards never attained the value speculators anticipated. However, the idea of premium value for vintage rookie cards held fast, and to this day first cards of stars from Hank Aaron to Nolan Ryan to Mariano Rivera command a premium over their later cards.

We return to the question of how to define a rookie card. In some cases, especially from 1956 to 1980 when Topps had an ironclad monopoly on issuing cards, the task was simple. Bob Gibson, for example, showed up in 1959, Lou Brock in 1962, Reggie Jackson in 1969 and Ozzie Smith in 1979. No one disputes those as true rookie cards.

In 1980, Topps’ monopoly was successfully challenged in court. Donruss and Fleer, companies itching to enter the lucrative card market, began producing baseball cards the following year. Competition quickly led to the release of late-season sets featuring players traded or arriving after the regular set was printed. Alternately called “Traded” or “Update” sets, these more limited editions often contained the first card of a new player.

In 1984 for example, Fleer Update boasted the first cards of Roger Clemens, Dwight Gooden and Kirby Puckett. Each were featured in regular sets of the three card companies in 1985, but confusion reigned, and still does, about whether to call the 1984 Update or regular-issue cards from 1985 their true rookie cards.

A more famous example of confusion involves one of the most valuable and highly sought cards of the modern era, roughly defined as beginning after World War II. The 1952 Topps Mickey Mantle is often referred to as his rookie card, but in 1951 a Mantle card appeared in a set produced by Topps rival Bowman Gum. The two companies went head-to-head until Topps triumphed and bought out Bowman in 1956.

Because Topps was the eventual winner, or perhaps because Mantle’s 1952 Topps card was larger and more aesthetically pleasing than the Bowman version, many collectors casually refer to the 1952 Topps as the Mantle rookie card.
Another source of confusion emanates from Topps’ practice of using labels and symbols for rookie stars long before the current rookie card concept came into play. Sometimes the label fit, such as Carl Yastrzemski’s first card in 1960, emblazoned with the words “Sport Magazine 1960 Rookie Star.” However, the next year Yastrzemski’s card includes a prominent star with the words “1961 Rookie” within it. Little did Topps know such inconsistencies would befuddle a future generation of collectors.

The strangest inconsistency is found in the curious cardboard saga of Lou Piniella. In 1964, Piniella appeared on a card titled Rookie Stars of the Washington Senators, in 1968 on Rookie Stars of the Cleveland Indians, and in 1969 on Rookie Stars of the Seattle Pilots, a team with whom he never actually played.

In addition to these confusions, sometimes uncertainty of what constitutes a rookie card results from companies issuing what might be termed “pre-rookie” cards. In the 1990s, several sets featured major league prospects prior to their reaching the big leagues. Would they qualify as rookie cards?

Topps included in their regular 1985 issue a subset of players from the 1984 USA Olympics team that included Mark McGwire. Are they rookie cards?

The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum grappled with those questions when putting together its Shoebox Treasures exhibit, which opened to rave reviews in May.

“We checked several sources, including the ‘Standard Catalog of Vintage Baseball Cards’ published by Sports Collectors Digest, and decided a rookie card had to be that of a player already in the major leagues when it was issued by a national card company,” said John Odell, the Museum’s curator of history and research and the lead curator on the exhibit.

Fast forward to today. Comparing card collecting in the 20th century to the 21st is like comparing the Wright Brothers’ “Kitty Hawk” plane to the International Space Station. While collectors sorted amongst a handful of companies and a few subsets after Topps’ monopoly ended in 1981, today’s collectors face a dizzying array of choices.

An attempt was made to bring the proliferation of card manufacturers under control in 2009. Major League Baseball inked an agreement with Topps granting exclusive rights to use team logos in their photos, but that did nothing to slow the proliferation of sets, subsets and variations of individual cards. Topps spokesperson Wendy Freedman uses Shohei Ohtani, who debuted in 2018, as an example.

“If you have an Ohtani rookie card, there exists base cards, parallel cards (a base card with various different borders such as yellow, green, gold, etc.), autograph cards, relic cards and the list goes on,” Freedman said.

As a result, one website lists a whopping 2,470 variations of Ohtani rookie cards.

“But no matter the generation, the initial appearance of a player on a card still produces magic – even to those on the cards. “Second to signing my first contract,” said Hall of Famer Dave Winfield, “for me to appear on my first baseball card was confirmation that I’d made it to Major League Baseball.”

David Moriah is a freelance writer from Lawrence, N.J.
It was the mark of a manager who could bring out the best in the game’s newest players. Lasorda won two World Series titles and four NL pennants in his 20-year Hall of Fame managerial career with the Dodgers from 1977 until 1996. And his track record with rookies wasn’t limited to that five-year run in the ’90s. Rick Sutcliffe (1979), Steve Howe (1980), Fernando Valenzuela (1981) and Steve Sax (1982) also won Rookie of the Year honors under Lasorda, who managed nine rookie winners in all.

“He worked with the younger guys, he would throw BP to us constantly – I don’t know what it was, but he was able to reach us,” Karros said. “Looking back, we weren’t married, we didn’t have families, we didn’t have the other obligations.

“So whether it was, ‘Hey, let’s get on a private plane and go to the Doral Open to have dinner with Jack Nicklaus,’ which he did for me and Piazza, or ‘Let’s go to dinner,’ those things were beyond baseball. Tommy treated us like he was a father figure.”

Hall of Fame manager Tony La Russa, who won three World Series titles – one with
Oakland in 1989 and two with St. Louis in 2006 and 2011 – and six pennants, also had great results with rookies. Six of his players – Ron Kittle (1983) and Ozzie Guillen (1985) with the White Sox, Jose Canseco (1986), Mark McGwire (1987) and Walt Weiss (1988) with the A’s, and Albert Pujols with the Cardinals in 2001 – won Rookie of the Year honors.

“I didn’t really ‘handle’ them,” La Russa said of his approach to managing rookies. “It was more recognizing how advanced they were. They weren’t the typical young players that you had to be careful with their emotions or coach them into rising to the occasion or protect them from pressure situations so they could develop. You just recognized how special they were and wrote them in there.”

La Russa said it took a village to raise those
rookies. His 1985 White Sox team was led by veterans Carlton Fisk and Tom Seaver. Those late 1980s A's clubs featured veterans such as Dave Stewart, Dennis Eckersley and Dave Parker. McGwire, then 37, and Jim Edmonds guided Pujols in 2001.

“Whatever your sport is, whatever the challenge, whether you’re Vince Lombardi or Bill Belichick or Gregg Popovich, if your message is not co-signed by the leaders on your team, it’s not going to be as effective,” La Russa said.

“Because no matter how persuasive you are, when you leave, they’re in there by themselves. And you need to keep guys pumping the message about team play and competing and all that stuff.”

There were usually early markers to indicate that youngsters were ready to “handle the bright lights of the major leagues and not be intimidated by the step up,” La Russa said.

For Weiss, it was a September call-up in 1987, when the 23-year-old shortstop replaced veteran Alfredo Griffin in the heat of a pennant race, hit .462 (12 for 26) and shined defensively in 15 games.

“There were a handful of times when we had a one- or two-run lead in the ninth, one of the last ground balls went to him, and he made plays,” La Russa said. “He wasn’t tight. He just rose to the occasion. Same thing with his at-bats.”

Weiss’ ability under pressure prompted Oakland to trade Griffin. Weiss took over in 1988 and combined a solid bat (.250 batting average, 17 doubles in 147 games) with superb glove work to win rookie honors.

For McGwire, it was a refusal to veer an inch from a simple approach that enabled him to hit .289 with an American League-leading 49 homers and a .618 slugging percentage along with 118 RBI in 1987.

“He wanted to keep hitting really basic,” La Russa said. “He wasn’t into the game-planning that pitchers and catchers do. He didn’t want to be distracted by that. He just wanted to see it and hit it.”

For Pujols, it was a Spring Training game in late March 2001. Pujols spent most of 2000 at Class A Peoria, and though he was crushing the ball in big league camp, there were doubts he was ready to jump to the big leagues.

“The expectation was that at some point, he’s going to go down, and when you have a young guy who’s having a really good camp, you want him to leave with confidence, right?” La Russa said. “Well, this guy was so good, we actually tested him to show he’s not ready.”

La Russa did so — or so he thought — by batting Pujols cleanup in a Grapefruit League game against Montreal’s Javier Vázquez, who featured a lively 90-mph fastball, along with a slider, curve and changeup.

“Everyone was thinking this was unfair,” La Russa said. “They were saying, ‘Are you trying to get him sent out?’ The first time up, he struck out on a slider down and away. He chased it, and I’m thinking, ‘OK, see? He’s getting exposed.’ Next time up, he took the same slider and one-hopped the right-center field wall, and everyone said, ‘OK, this guy is for real.’”

Pujols hit .329 with 37 homers, 47 doubles and 130 RBI as a rookie, the start of an illustrious career in which he’s won three NL Most Valuable Player Awards and two World Series rings and amassed more than 3,000 hits, 650 homers and 2,000 RBI.

Pujols didn’t need much prodding or coddling. The self-driven slugger was a superstar from the get-go and the most feared right-handed hitter in the game for a decade. But he is an exception.

Most first-year players — even those who win Rookie of the Year honors — need some reassurances along the way.

Karros opened 1992 in a first-base platoon. He won the starting job shortly after hitting that first homer, but lost it after a 2-for-25 slump in early May.

“I’m like, ‘Kal Daniels is coming off the disabled list, the writing is on the wall, I’m gonna get sent down,’” Karros said. “To Tommy’s credit, he used me as a pinch-hitter four times that week.”

In a May 20 game against the Cubs, Karros hit what he described as “a thousand-hop grounder that just gets by the mound and rolls into center field.” The two-out single sparked a three-run rally in a 5–3 win.

The second pinch hit, on May 22 against Pittsburgh, was a double off the wall. The next night, in the bottom of the ninth, Karros crushed a pinch-hit three-run homer off Pirates closer Stan Belinda for a 5–4 walk-off win.

“I started the next day, never to give up the job,” said Karros, who batted .268 with 270 homers in 12 years with the Dodgers. “By Tommy giving me the chance, by pumping me up… I’m not going to say he was in my corner yet, but he was still using me.

“Then he gave me the job. Other than maybe Mike Trout, whenever anybody says, ‘Oh, I knew he was gonna be great,’ no, you had a break somewhere along the line. For me, I see that 50-hopper up the middle and my life is completely changed, and that’s Tommy giving me an opportunity.”

Mike DiGiovanna covers baseball for the Los Angeles Times.
there was another Hall of Famer’s son in the visiting dugout: Blue Jays slugger Vladimir Guerrero Jr. He could appreciate all the love in Houston, and with it being Father’s Day weekend, he knew Biggio’s homecoming was even sweeter.

“You feel happy,” Guerrero Jr. said. “It’s Father’s Day, and all of his family is here, and I know he’s very proud.

“I think the biggest thing you feel is happiness. You’re happy in the sense that because your dad played here, they cheer you. You feel at home. Just imagine, he’s been here since he was a kid. He’s at home.”

In many ways, Guerrero Jr. has felt at home in Toronto as well. He was born in Montreal when his father, Vladimir Guerrero Sr., played for the Expos, and was practically a household name himself by the time the Blue Jays’ front office let him leave his minor league team to attend his father’s induction in Cooperstown in 2018.

Guerrero Jr. was considered the top prospect in baseball in the summer of 2018. By then, Dereck Rodríguez, the son of 2017 inductee Iván “Pudge” Rodríguez, was already in the majors.

In less than a year, three sons of Hall
Blue Jays succeed than trying to live up to their legendary fathers’ legacies.

“T hey did their job, and w e’re doing our ow n job now,” G uerrero Jr. said. “W e’re just here trying to help our team w in.”

With that said, there is som ething special about playing in the m ajors against your dad’s old team in the city w here you grew up. “I alw ays w anted to play in this stadium , w hether or not it w as w ith ‘A stros’ on m y chest,” C avan said.

C avan w as only 4 years old w hen his father played his last gam e at the A strodom e. M ost of his m em ories of his father’s career are at M inute M aid Park, w hich opened in 2000.

Rodríguez led the way, taking the mound for the Giants on May 29, 2018, at 25 years old. Guerrero Jr. made his highly anticipated debut with the Blue Jays on April 26, 2019, at 20 years old.

“I feel very happy,” Guerrero Sr. said. “You know, he is my first son. I never pushed him to play baseball, but since he was [about] 3 years old, he took one of my bats in M ontreal and he used to swing.

“I think you feel happy to see him grow up and now being 20 to be in the major leagues. I pray to God to give him health because I believe he could do a good job.”

Biggio followed Rodríguez and Guerrero to the majors this past May 24 at the age of 24, becoming the 15th son of a Hall of Famer to play in the big leagues. The other Hall of Famers and their sons to reach the majors are: Earl Averill Sr. and Jr., Freddie Lindstrom and Charlie Lindstrom, Eddie Collins Sr. and Jr., Jim O’Rourke and Queenie O’Rourke, Ed Augustine Walsh and Ed Arthur Walsh, Tony Gwynn Sr. and Jr., Yogi and Dale Berra, Connie and Earle Mack, George and Dave and Dick Sisler, Tony Pérez and Eduardo Pérez and Tim Raines Sr. and Jr.

As far as Guerrero and Biggio are concerned, they’re more focused on helping the young Blue Jays succeed than trying to live up to their legendary fathers’ legacies.

“They did their job, and we’re doing our own job now,” Guerrero Jr. said. “We’re just here trying to help our team win.”

With that said, there is something special about playing in the majors against your dad’s old team in the city where you grew up. “I always wanted to play in this stadium, whether or not it was with ‘Astros’ on my chest,” Cavan said.

Cavan was only 4 years old when his father played his last game at the Astrodome. Most of his memories of his father’s career are at Minute Maid Park, which opened in 2000.
and where the Biggio brothers were constant fixtures in the home clubhouse. In one of the most memorable moments in Astros history, Craig Biggio famously lifted Cavan into his arms near second base in 2007—moments after collecting his 3,000th hit.

Being part of those experiences can provide a leg up for a young ballplayer.

“Obviously they need the skill set to have a chance to make the majors,” Craig Biggio said. “Also, if they were old enough to see what their dad did (as a major leaguer), they had a golden opportunity to see how he acted and how his teammates acted day in and day out.

“I think that’s huge in the industry because you get a little bit of a head start because you understand it,” Biggio continued. “You’ve still got to go out there and perform. Don’t get me wrong, it’s extremely difficult. But I think it’s exciting for me and I’m sure a lot of the other pro guys to see their sons… make it.”

Cavan and his brother used to hold fake press conferences at Minute Maid Park as kids. They would go into the media conference room, sit behind the mic, pretend they were former manager Phil Garner and talk about their father collecting the game-winning hit.

On June 14, after batting leadoff and driving in the Blue Jays’ lone two runs in a loss to the Astros, Cavan sat near his father in the Minute Maid Park media conference room for a real press conference.

“It feels great,” Patty Biggio said. “It feels very natural. It’s a place he grew up in, a place he feels very comfortable at. We’re just so excited for him and so proud of how hard he’s worked to get to this moment of having a dream of his come true.

“Playing at Minute Maid has always been a dream of his, either as an Astro or any team. Seeing him so excited makes us so happy.”

Guerrero was among the AL’s top rookies in 2019, slugging 15 home runs and batting .272, and stole the show in the Home Run Derby during All-Star Game festivities at Cleveland’s Progressive Field. He finished second, even though his father advised him to skip the long-ball competition.

Guerrero Sr. missed attending the derby in person because he had business back in his native Dominican Republic.

“Thank God I saw him with many people in my home, and we were proud of the job he did,” Guerrero Sr. said. “Like we say, ‘He didn’t just shut me up; he shut those up that didn’t want him to go.’ But I knew he could do a good job.”

Rodriguez has thrown 217.1 innings across two major league seasons, posting a 4.10 ERA and winning 12 games. Pudge has watched most of those innings, and having handled so many pitchers over his career, he usually knows exactly what pitch his son will throw.

Unsurprisingly, he agonizes over close calls that go against his son.

“You just try to be composed,” he said. “But when it’s a close call, obviously I don’t scream at the umpire, but I [make] a little face or something.”

Biggio was a steady producer while serving as a super utility player during his rookie campaign, totaling 16 home runs in 354 at-bats and adding 14 stolen bases.

As fate would have it, he actually played his father’s old position, second base, at Minute Maid Park in his first visit home. He even collected the first double of his career there, which was quite poetic because his father was known as one of the best doubles hitters of his era.

“I think it’s a lot harder to watch them do it because the one thing that I control is myself,” Craig Biggio said. “I don’t control him. He’s pretty good. He understands himself. It’s like anything: It’s a hard game.

“The guy that’s throwing the ball at you is pretty good. The guy that’s catching the ball is pretty good. Everybody’s pretty good. It was definitely easier for me when I played because I controlled everything. Now watching, you have a different perspective on things.”

For Craig Biggio, Iván Rodríguez and Vladimir Guerrero Sr., their perspective is a Hall of Fame perspective.

Jose de Jesus Ortiz, who covered the Astros from 2001 through 2015 for The Houston Chronicle, is the Supervising Editor for La Vida Baseball and former lead columnist at The St. Louis Post-Dispatch.
King of the Rooks

The term “rookie” is almost as old as baseball itself, and first-year phenoms have been enthralling fans for more than a century.

BY MATT KELLY

American’s fascination with baseball phenoms is nearly as old as the sport itself, and that’s especially true with prodigious rookies.

Take, for example, Walter Johnson. His box score lines with his semipro team in Weiser, Idaho, were sent across the country via telegram in 1907, reporting he threw the ball “so fast nobody can see it.” (Weiser residents tried to convince Johnson to stay, offering him a cigar store on the town square.)

Later, an 18-year-old Bob Feller found himself on the cover of Time magazine in April 1937, eight months after he struck out 15 St. Louis Browns in his first major league start. And Bernard Malamud’s The Natural lives on to this day, thanks to the aura surrounding its central character, 34-year-old rookie Roy Hobbs.

Baseball itself predates the word “rookie” – but not by much. British poet Rudyard Kipling was the first to use the word in widespread text in 1892 – 16 years after the founding of the National League – writing: “So ‘ark an ’ eed, you rookies, which is always grumblin’ sore,” in reference to recruits to the army.

Baseball itself predates the word “rookie” – but not by much. British poet Rudyard Kipling was the first to use the word in widespread text in 1892 – 16 years after the founding of the National League – writing: “So ‘ark an ’ eed, you rookies, which is always grumblin’ sore,” in reference to recruits to the army.

The term wasn’t used in baseball until 1908, per “Dickson’s Baseball Dictionary,” when The Washington Post somberly stated that the “extra choice rookies touted to shunt the ancient and honorable members from their jobs are as lonesome as the strawberry on the roof of the shortcake.” Baseball’s immense popularity at that time likely brought the word “rookie” to greater prominence outside of military jargon.

But the Baseball Writers’ Association of America’s Rookie of the Year Award has a surprisingly shorter history; the award only celebrated its 70th birthday two years ago. Physical tokens of rookie appreciation were sparse during the first half of the 20th century, at least in the public record. San Francisco Mayor Angelo Rossi gave Joe DiMaggio, one of the period’s most celebrated rookies, the key to the city after he returned home from leading the Yankees to the 1936 World Series title.

A top rookie honor wasn’t installed in any official capacity until 1940, when the BBWAA’s Chicago chapter selected future Hall of Famer Lou Boudreau as the top first-year player and continued voting on freshmen through ’46. That’s when the Sporting News began its own Rookie of the Year Award (an honor the publication still hands out to this day) and honored Phillies outfielder Del Ennis as the majors’ top newcomer. The national BBWAA voting body joined the mix the following year, honoring Jackie Robinson with its first official Rookie of the Year Award.

The winners who followed Robinson are well documented and well known to passionate fans and trivia buffs. But here’s a quick look at some rookie campaigns that captured the country’s imagination before the BBWAA established its award.

Christy Mathewson, 1901

Mathewson debuted with the Giants the previous July, but New York employed him as little more than a batting-practice pitcher, prompting Mathewson to write to a friend: “I don’t give a rap whether they sign me or not,” at the end of the season. The Giants sent him back to the minor league club in Norfolk, Va., that winter, and then the Reds signed him for $100 and promptly dealt him right back to the Giants for Amos Rusie.

Mathewson went on to win 20 games, record a 2.41 ERA and throw a no-hitter in his first full campaign, inspiring Manhattanites to call him “The Big Six” in honor of the local fire company that was fastest to put out a fire.

Grover Cleveland Alexander, 1911

The Phillies paid the Syracuse Stars $500 for Alexander’s services late in the 1910 season, $2,500 less than they gave Scranton for fellow right-hander George Chalmers. But the son of a Nebraska farmer took many by surprise and bulldozed NL hitters the following year, setting rookie records for wins (28, still the top modern-era mark for rooks) and strikeouts (227) while compiling a 2.57 ERA. “Old Pete” was the pitcher of record in 35 percent of the fourth-place Phillies’ victories that season.

Shoeless Joe Jackson, 1911

Jackson won minor league batting titles with Savannah and New Orleans but struggled in two cups of coffee with the A’s, prompting Connie Mack to trade him to Cleveland. There, Jackson simply battered AL pitching in 1911. He racked up 233 hits, including 45 doubles and 19 triples, and finished runner-up to Ty Cobb in the batting race with a .408 average – still a modern-era record for any...
qualified rookie by a full 35 points. Babe Ruth would tell Grantland Rice eight years later that he modeled his left-handed swing after Jackson’s.

**Paul and Lloyd Waner, 1926 and ’27**

The Waner household (or maybe more appropriately, the Pirates’ clubhouse) must have had a heck of a debate about who was the better rookie, after each brother dominated his first taste of big league pitching with Pittsburgh. In 1926, Paul hit .336 and paced the majors with 22 triples while finishing 12th in NL MVP voting; Lloyd followed in ’27 with a .355 average, a league-best 133 runs and a sixth-place showing in the MVP vote. “Big Poison” and “Little Poison” as Paul and Lloyd came to be not-so-affectionately known to rival pitchers, combined for 5,611 hits over their Hall of Fame careers.

**Wally Berger, 1930**

Berger’s 38 home runs for the Boston Braves stood as the NL’s rookie mark (alongside Frank Robinson, who hit 38 in 1956) for nearly nine decades until the Dodgers’ Cody Bellinger topped it by one in 2017. Interest in Berger’s talent was so high that he held out before his rookie season, but proved he was worth the negotiations as he also set a rookie mark by driving in 119 runs for the sixth-place Braves. Eighteen of Berger’s 38 dingers came in his first 50 career games, also a record that stood until the Yankees’ Gary Sánchez reached 19 in 2016.

**Joe DiMaggio, 1936**

Joltin’ Joe looked back on his rookie year as fondly as any season of his career (he proudly wore his 1936 World Series ring for the rest of his life), and Mickey Mantle might be the only player whose debut generated as much interest as DiMaggio’s in the Bronx. Anticipation built after DiMaggio, who the Yankees purchased for a whopping $25,000, hit .398, clubbed 34 home runs and drove in 154 runs for the PCL’s San Francisco Seals in ’35. It nearly boiled over when a foot injury delayed DiMaggio’s debut until early May 1936.

DiMaggio went 3-for-6 with a triple in his first game and never looked back, finishing with a major league-best 15 three-baggers, 29 homers and 125 RBI to go with his .323 average and .576 slugging percentage. He then hit .346 against the Giants in the World Series to help the Yankees claim their first title of the post-Babe Ruth era.

**Ted Williams, 1939**

The Splendid Splinter’s rookie-record 145 RBI in 1939 seem less likely to be matched with each passing year (Albert Pujols’ 130 in 2001 are the closest attempt this century, and Williams’ 1.045 OPS has only been topped once by any freshman since: Aaron Judge’s 1.049 in 2017). Williams mastered the strike zone immediately, ranking second in the AL with 107 walks while striking out just 64 times. Williams always aimed to be the greatest hitter who ever lived, and his debut season put him directly on that path.

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**Left:** Paul Waner (left) hit .336 and led the big leagues with 22 triples as a rookie with the Pirates in 1926. A year later, Waner’s brother Lloyd (right) joined the Bucs and recorded 223 hits and scored 133 runs in his rookie season. **Right:** Joe DiMaggio poses for a photo at Fenway Park during his rookie season of 1936. One of the most heralded rookies of his time, DiMaggio hit 39 home runs and drove in 125 runs that year to lead the Yankees to the first of four straight World Series championships.

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*Matt Kelly is a freelance writer from Brooklyn, N.Y.*
Jeff Bagwell, now 51, became one of the best first basemen of his era and is synonymous with a golden age of Houston Astros baseball. He was elected to the Hall of Fame in 2017, joining former teammate Craig Biggio – who punched his Cooperstown ticket two years earlier.

Bagwell is Houston’s all-time leader in homers, runs batted in (1,529) and walks (1,401). He ranks second behind Biggio in hits (2,314), total bases (4,213) and games played (2,150). He boasted a .297 lifetime batting average.

Bagwell was the 1994 National League MVP and was named to four All-Star Games. But it was his selection as the 1991 NL Rookie of the Year that elevated him to the lofty status of superstar and the beginning of his road to the Hall of Fame. He batted .294 with 15 homers and 82 RBI in his first season with the Astros.

Bagwell was born in Boston and grew up in Killington, Conn., where he and his family were devoted Red Sox fans. Bagwell played a variety of sports, including soccer in which he excelled, at Xavier High School, but it was at the University of Hartford – along with two summers in the renowned Cape Cod League – where he began to attract the attention of baseball scouts.

For Bagwell, it was a dream come true when the Red Sox drafted him in 1989’s fourth round. He played that summer at Winter Haven (Fla.) and in 1990 was promoted to the New Britain Red Sox of the Double-A Eastern League.

Those moments all preceded “The Trade.”

Bagwell was the Eastern League’s MVP, batting .333 with four homers and 61 RBI as a third baseman in 1990. Keep in mind that the Red Sox already had Wade Boggs at that position.

“I was having a great year in Double-A,” Bagwell said. “Butch Hobson, our manager, said one day, ‘You’re pushing for a call-up.’ I said, ‘A call-up to what?’ He said a call-up to the big leagues. And then I got traded on August 31st – to Houston!”

The Red Sox were in search of relief pitching to improve their chances of making the playoffs. General manager Lou Gorman contacted the Astros about reliever Larry Andersen and Bagwell was mentioned as a possibility.

Originally, the Astros balked, but ultimately accepted Bagwell for Andersen in a deal that has since been labeled one of the most one-sided trades in baseball history.

“It was the worst day ever, but more for my family than me,” Bagwell said. “My dad, mom and even my grandmother lived and died with the Red Sox. For me, it was more that I didn’t
understand it. I was having a great year in Double-A, hitting .333.”

Bagwell recalled the aftermath of the trade: “My dad came to pick me up and said, ‘I think this is a really good move for you.’ I just didn’t understand the business of baseball. I was just going about my business of playing baseball.

“Back then, we didn’t have social media, we didn’t have MLB Network, the coverage we have today. The great thing about that whole situation and what I tell the kids in the minor leagues, ‘Don’t worry about who’s (the player) in front of you. Just do what you can do. Either they promote you or trade you.’

“I was having this great year in the minors, and then, all of a sudden, I get traded to the Astros.”

Pausing a moment, he added: “And then I made the team out of Spring Training and, believe me, it was the biggest blessing of my career.”

Add to that the move from third base to first. Boggs, who would become a Hall of Famer, was blocking any chance Bagwell had to take over third for the Red Sox.

During the Astros’ 1991 Spring Training at Kissimmee, Fla., Bagwell played most of his games at third base, but Ken Caminiti had been the team’s starter there the previous two seasons.

“My dad was in Spring Training and watching Cami play. He was something like 10-for-10 at the plate,” Bagwell recalled. “Dad looked at me and said, ‘Well, going to Tucson (the Astros’ Triple-A team) won’t be so bad.’ I didn’t know what to think.

“So, with about 10 days to go in the spring, I thought I was going to get sent down. That’s about the time when Bob Watson (of the Astros’ front office) approached me and said in no uncertain terms: ‘You can play third base in Tucson or first base in the big leagues.’ Now, I’m not the brightest guy in the world, but easily could figure that one out. Then I got this crash course playing first base.”

Yes, Bagwell agreed, “Bad things make good things happen.”

But first base?

“Unless I was the starting shortstop, playing first base is just great,” he said. “You get to talk to everybody, whether it be the umpires, the first base coach, the players.”

He even got to speak with Ozzie Smith, who himself was working on the tail end of his Hall of Fame career.

“I remember it vividly,” Bagwell said. “The moment was incredible. Ozzie got on first and asked me, ‘How you doing, how’s it going at first base?’ I said, ‘Well, I’m struggling with my backhand. He said ‘You got to get out in front more, blah, blah, blah.’ I get back to the dugout and say, ‘Oh, my god. Ozzie Smith just gave me a fielding lesson. It was crazy.’

Three seasons after winning the Rookie of the Year Award, Bagwell was the unanimous winner of the NL MVP for the strike-shortened 1994 season, batting .368 with 39 homers and 116 RBI. He was the first player in the franchise’s history to receive that recognition.

José Altuve became the second Astros player
I necessarily miss the day-in, day-out grind, especially with how my shoulder was at the end. That made it difficult, but I certainly do miss being around my teammates and the coaches.

“Yes, I have been blessed. When I got hurt, I found out how to be an extra guy, and I was the Astros’ hitting coach for two-and-a-half months, so that made me appreciate even more the amount of time the coaches put in for the players every single day. I still stay involved with that part of the game, so that’s what I enjoy.”

Bagwell jokes when he says he considers himself “a baseball lifer.” Just as quickly, he adds: “Baseball doesn’t define me as a person. It’s what I do with my kids and as a husband that defines me.”

Yet…

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Baseball is something that’s in our blood and it’s difficult to get out,” he said, choosing his words carefully. “Maybe it’s the mental part. Giving guys back stuff we have already been through. I don’t go into the clubhouse and talk about, ‘I did this, I did that.’ I try to say, ‘I did this or that when I was struggling; I get how you’re feeling.’

“This is what we did and it’s our passion. That’s the special bond we all have and it never leaves us.”

Ausmus agrees.

“We had a lot of fun together,” he said. “He played the game the right way. He was a quiet leader, never stood on a soapbox in the middle of the clubhouse and started yelling. He would talk to individuals when something needed to be addressed. He mostly led by the way he carried himself, the way he handled himself with the media and the way he played the game.”

Bagwell is on a roll talking baseball, before abruptly stopping when asked what he thinks his legacy will be.

“I was a player who could be counted on every day to play,” he finally said. “I showed up whether I was hurt or not; what I did became boring, because that was me. It was something my teammates could count on.”

And then: “If my teammates were happy being my teammates and they thought I was accountable and available, that’s all I could ask for.”

Hal Bodley, dean of American baseball writers, is correspondent emeritus for MLB.com. He has been covering Major League Baseball since 1958 and was a USA TODAY baseball editor/columnist for 25 years.
FRAMING THE FUTURE

HIGH-SPEED VIDEO ANALYSIS OF 1980s WHITE SOX PLAYERS IS NOW A PART OF MUSEUM COLLECTION.

BY ROGER LANSING

With today’s computer 3-D models and statistical analytics available to baseball fans and coaches alike, an idea presented more than 40 years ago to Roland Hemon by a young professor of biomechanics may seem quaint.

But when Dr. Robert Shapiro’s plan to use a high-speed camera to film starting pitchers during actual games was adopted by the Chicago White Sox in the early 1980s, he set into motion a concept that can be directly linked to MLB’s Statcast and other important analytic technologies in use today.

The results of that groundbreaking work are now preserved at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum.

“We wrote [Veeck] a letter and he invited us to meet with Roland Hemon, who was the general manager,” Shapiro said. “They allowed us to do some batting practice with the team. We collected some bats and marked them up, did some 3-D filming that didn’t quite work out… but we also did high-speed filming of their hitters. We presented the film and they were amazed, because they hadn’t seen anything like that.

“They had used regular film, 30 frames per second, and slowed it down, but the quality of that isn’t very good. The high-speed film cameras shoot at 250 frames per second. To see the batters at that speed really amazed them.”

From there, Dr. Shapiro took a job as a professor of biomechanics at Northern Illinois University and began to set up a lab there. Noting his experience with baseball, NIU asked Shapiro to teach a baseball coaching class to the physical education students. On a whim, he reached out to Hemon to ask if he could bring his class to meet with one of the White Sox coaches prior to a game.

Hemon, the Hall of Fame’s 2011 Buck...
O’Neil Lifetime Achievement Award winner, was happy to oblige and arranged for the class to meet with coach Bobby Winkles. Hemond invited Shapiro to join him for dinner before the game; that’s when Shapiro mentioned his idea about using high-speed cameras to film game footage of the starting pitchers.

Hemond asked Shapiro to write a proposal and send it to him. He did, but Veeck was not interested in funding research.

Shortly thereafter, though, Veeck sold the team – and new owner Jerry Reinsdorf took over and brought in a whole new medical staff.

“Suddenly, I get a call from Roland Hemond telling me that Jim Boccardin (Dr. James Boccardin, White Sox team physician) was interested in talking to me about my research,” Shapiro said. “He and I met and from there we collaborated on the entire study. Manager Tony La Russa and pitching coach Dave Duncan were really interested.

“We had some film that we had taken earlier (during the Veeck years) and Duncan was very excited to see what we had. He had been a catcher and was seeing things in the pitchers’ motion that he had never seen before. So we put together a group of NIU students to help and started shooting films. We would go to the ballpark during day games, since there wasn’t enough light at night to shoot high-speed film.

“As far as I know, no one else was taking films like that during major league games in major league ballparks,” Shapiro added. “The White Sox organization and Northern Illinois University were very supportive of the entire project.”

Shapiro’s team filmed the White Sox starting pitchers in regular-season games in 1982, and then in Spring Training and the regular season from 1983 into 1989, continuing their work even after Shapiro became a professor of biomechanics at Hall of Famer Tom Seaver pitched for the White Sox for three seasons from 1984-86 and was part of a groundbreaking project by Robert Shapiro to film ballplayers to understand their biomechanical processes.
the University of Kentucky in 1985. The high-speed films include members of the White Sox pitching staff – Tom Seaver, Floyd Bannister, Jerry Koosman and LaMarr Hoyt – along with some opposing pitchers such as Hall of Famer Bert Blyleven, the Yankees’ Ron Guidry and the Royals’ Larry Gura. They also did some high-speed filming of White Sox batters, including 2019 Hall of Fame inductee Harold Baines.

“In 1982, it seemed like LaMarr Hoyt started every Sunday day game. We shot a lot of film of him in ’82,” Shapiro said.

Duncan analyzed his pitchers’ performances using the films that Shapiro’s team collected, and whether or not it made a difference, the fact remains that Hoyt won the American League Cy Young Award in 1983.

Today, those high-speed films and videos, more than 80 in total, along with the biomechanical analysis report prepared from the films and video by Dr. Shapiro and his team, are part of the Dr. Robert Shapiro film collection after having been donated to the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum.

“For a kid who wanted to grow up to be Mickey Mantle, knowing that some of my work is in the Hall of Fame, it’s amazing,” Shapiro said. “I am at a loss for words. Before, I used to tell people the unique thing about me was that I was at Woodstock, but this tops that.”

“I am really appreciative of the fact that the Hall of Fame is taking these films and preserving them. To know that high-speed game film of pitchers like Tom Seaver and others will be preserved. I don’t think that there is anything else like that in existence.”

Roger Lansing is the recorded media manager at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum.
Our Museum in Action

These ongoing projects are just a few of the ways the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum’s mission is being supported today.

WHAT WE’VE DONE TOGETHER

Museum benches

Thanks to generous gifts from Country Casual Teak (a Museum sponsor and bench manufacturer), Edward and Marilyn Foote and the Vermont Mountaineers baseball organization – a member of the New England Collegiate Baseball League (NECBL) – three new benches have been added to the Museum and grounds to enhance our visitor experience.

There are a number of bench spaces still available on the Museum grounds and other important areas as part of this program. Donors supporting the installation of a bench with a gift of $2,500 will be recognized with an engraved 8” x 2” brass plaque on the bench, allowing up to three lines of text that may be used to honor a loved one or your favorite baseball legend.

You can learn more about the Museum Bench Program at baseballhall.org/benchprogram.

S.S. John McGraw christening bottle

With generous grant support from the Greater Hudson Heritage Network, a christening bottle used for the S.S. John J. McGraw will receive much-needed conservation work. McGraw’s widow, Blanche, swung a Louisville Slugger bat – with the silk-wrapped bottle attached – into the bow of the boat, christening the vessel.

Named for New York Giants player-manager John McGraw, the World War II Liberty Ship brought supplies both to troops and civilians in need around the world. The vessel, one of over 2,700 such ships, launched on Sept. 22, 1943.

The NYSCA/GHHN Conservation Treatment Grant Program is made possible with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

Photos to be digitally preserved

Thanks to a number of generous donors, photographs from our archive will be digitally preserved and added to our online digital collection, which you can browse at collection.baseballhall.org.

WHAT YOU CAN HELP US DO

Moe Berg spikes

They say you can’t understand someone until you’ve walked a mile in their shoes, but a mile is not enough to truly fathom the enigmatic Moe Berg, who wore these baseball shoes (below) during his 15-season big league career that spanned the 1920s and ’30s. The fascinating Ship brought supplies both to troops and civilians in need around the world. The vessel, one of over 2,700 such ships, launched on Sept. 22, 1943.

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They include:

• Henry Aaron – Thanks to a gift from Debra J. Williams
• Earl Averill – Thanks to a gift from Paul D. Phillips
• Earle Combs – Thanks to a gift from Paul Anishanslin, John Greenthal and Rollie Loewen
• Roger Connor – Thanks to a gift from Greg Kelley
• Chick Hafey – Thanks to a gift from Andy Dean, Jonathan Epstein, Robert Hebdon, Benjamin Wright and John Wright
• Al Kaline – Thanks to a gift from Jeffrey Archambault
• George Kelly – Thanks to a gift from Benjamin Wright and an anonymous donor
• Willie Mays – Thanks to a gift from Stuart Director, Bruce Director, Nash Van Dyke and an anonymous donor
• Frank Robinson – Thanks to a gift from Daniel P. Carmichael and Victoria Risley
• Hack Wilson – Thanks to a gift from Robert Cavaliere

These spikes, worn by Moe Berg during his 15-year big league career, are part of the Museum’s collection and are in need of conservation work. After his playing days, Berg became a spy for the Office of Strategic Services during World War II.
story of this quintessential “good field, no hit” catcher reaches well beyond the diamond.

Berg displayed a relentless passion for knowledge by studying languages, law, history and literature at world-renowned universities such as NYU, Princeton, Columbia and the Sorbonne in Paris. An avid world traveler, he joined the Office of Strategic Services as an international spy during World War II, surreptitiously gleaning key information on how close the Nazis were to developing an atomic weapon. The O.S.S. even authorized the ballplayer-turned-secret agent to assassinate Werner Heisenberg if Berg felt the German physicist was close to making a nuclear bomb.

But Berg may be most famous for his mysterious and often baffling behavior. He obsessed over newspapers, reading them in their entirety, but shunning copies that had been touched by others. He owned multiple, identical dark gray suits, wearing the anonymous outfit almost every day of his adult life. And he sometimes passed friends on the street with nothing more than a knowing eye and a finger pressed to his lips as if to say, “You never saw me.”

The Hall of Fame’s exhibit, *Moe Berg: Big League Spy*, explores the life of the scholar/catcher/spy. By helping preserve these shoes, you can keep Berg’s unusual story alive, for today, tomorrow and years to come.

*Estimate for conservation to be performed B.R. Howard and Associates: $2,000*


We need your help to continue our work to digitally preserve the Museum’s photo collection, which contains more than 300,000 images. You can help us to preserve the images of the classes of 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990.

Cost to digitally preserve images of:

**Class of 1986**
- Bobby Doerr (50 images): $250
- Ernie Lombardi (80 images): $400
- Willie McCovey (76 images): $380

**Class of 1987**
- Ray Dandridge: FUNDED
- Catfish Hunter (68 images): $350
- Billy Williams (56 images): $280

**Class of 1988**
- Willie Stargell (94 images): $470

**Class of 1989**
- Al Barlick (12 images): $60
- Johnny Bench (119 images): $55
- Red Schoendienst (166 images): $830
- Carl Yastrzemski (160 images): $810

**Class of 1990**
- Joe Morgan (72 images): $360
- Jim Palmer: FUNDED

*108 images have already been digitally preserved thanks to a generous contribution from Peter Hand*

### Additional projects online

We are grateful for all our donors and Museum Members for helping us to preserve baseball history. We have accomplished a lot together, but there is more to be done.

Explore additional projects, including artifacts, photographs and Library documents that are in need of conservation and preservation, at our website.

[baseballhall.org/museuminaction](http://baseballhall.org/museuminaction)

For more information – or to make a donation of any amount toward one of the projects – visit [baseballhall.org/museuminaction](http://baseballhall.org/museuminaction) or contact our Development Team at (607) 547-0385 or development@baseballhall.org.
ROOKIE RECALLINGS

From your first year in the big leagues all the way to being a Hall of Famer, you learn a lot.

BY JOHNNY BENCH

I was 19 years old in August 1967 when I first got the call-up to the big leagues. I drove from (Triple-A) Buffalo to Cincinnati and was immediately put into the lineup by my manager, Dave Bristol, against Dick Ellsworth. I didn’t have that much time to think, but I felt like I was supposed to be there. When Dick threw me a fastball in my wheelhouse, I popped it up, but didn’t feel overmatched.

The nucleus of the team was guys like Tony Pérez, Pete Rose, Vada Pinson and Deron Johnson, who really welcomed me. My locker was next to Vada, a total class gentleman. He spoke in a quiet voice, sat there and polished his shoes. He loved to have his spikes shining. His locker was meticulous — everything was neat, everything was in its place — as was his preparation. The way Vada went about his business made an impression on me.

Around the batting cages, I knew to keep my mouth shut, but there was no hazing for us young kids. In the dugout, it was Deron Johnson giving me advice. He would say: “Hey kid, you ever see this pitcher before? He’s going to try to throw this little slider out there.” And Tom Helms helped me get a place to live in a hotel that rented out rooms.

We had coaches who were just terrific, like Whitey Wietelmann and Hal Smith, who was our catching coach. Hal always had the gentlest manner, even with the younger players. He told me, “I don’t have to work with you a lot, kid.” I can never say enough about Hal.

I wanted to take charge, even my first year in the majors. I remember Milt Pappas saying, “He chews me out just like a veteran would,” and that’s why they gave me the nickname The Little General. I would say, “Hey, let’s go, everybody on time, on the field. Let’s go!”

Looking back, I probably wasn’t supposed to do all that in my first year.

Entering my last game of the 1967 season, I only needed two or three at-bats to disqualify myself as a rookie the next year. As fate would have it, before I could get those at-bats, I suffered a [lacerated] thumb on a foul tip against the Cubs. That’s what left it open to me becoming Rookie of the Year in 1968.

With my thumb recovered the next spring, I expected to play, and play well. I wasn’t thinking about winning awards, but here I am on the cover of Sports Illustrated in the spring of ’68 with four other potential Rookies of the Year: Mike Torrez, Alan Foster, Don Pepper and Cisco Carlos.

Don Pavletich was unbelievable in Spring Training that year and won the catching job. Don hurt his right arm in the fifth game in Chicago, and it was the last game he caught that year. I caught the next 54 games in a row without a day off — and caught 152 of the 158 games we had left in 1968.

Winning the 1968 Rookie of the Year Award was special, but the most special part of that season was the All-Star Game at the Astrodome. I’m a 20-year-old All-Star, and I was scared to leave my locker. Then Willie Mays, who was sitting across from me, walked over and said, “You should have been the starting catcher.” That made everything right.

I felt like a rookie again in 1989, when I was inducted into the Hall of Fame. Here I am in Cooperstown, looking at the Hall of Famers around me — guys who were my absolute heroes — and everyone shared their congratulations.

It’s a busy weekend for the new Hall of Famers. Everyone’s pulling at you, everyone needs a ticket, everyone needs a room. That’s why, now, at Induction Weekend, I try to make every new guy feel like he’s special, try to make his family feel important — because they are.

I started a tradition with the rookie Hall of Famers to sit them down in a rocking chair at the Otsego Hotel, overlooking beautiful Otsego Lake. I tell them, “Everything’s going a mile a minute. Stop and think about where you are and what you’ve accomplished.” I want them to take the time to let it all sink in.

That’s what really makes Hall of Fame Weekend so special — being able to welcome these guys the same way I was welcomed into the Hall of Fame fraternity when I was the rookie.

Johnny Bench was named National League Rookie of the Year in 1968, launching a career that culminated in his election to the Hall of Fame in 1989.
Sunflowers and other fall blossoms decorate the Lippitt Farmhouse at the Farmers’ Museum at the end of a historic summer in Cooperstown.